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ABSTRACT

This packet contains selected papers from a conference on writing centers: "Inner-City Writing Centers in St. Louis Public Schools" (Carmen Charleston); "Non-traditional Students in the Writing Lab" (Marilyn Cozad); "Cooperation between the Writing Center and Student Support Services" (Coralyn Dahl and Rita Worrall); "Evaluating a Writing Center: A Self-Study" (James Eison); "The Tutor/Faculty Partnership: It's Required" (Geoff Gajewski); "Assessing Success: Evaluating the Work of a Writing Center" (Stephen H. Goldman); "Specialists vs. Generalists: Managing the Writing Center/Learning Center Connection" (Dave Healy); "Partners across the Curriculum: The Integration of WAC and Writing Centers" (Beth Impson and others); "Learning Styles: Issues, Questions, and the Roles of the Writing Center Tutor" (Cindy Johanek); "Dabbling with a Database: Is the Pain Worth the Profit?" (Robert Marrs and others); "Model of Collaboration: The Peer Tutor" (Ellen Mohr); "A Model for a Campus-Wide Writing Center" (Judy Strickland and others); "The Writing Center Staff as a Faculty Resource" (Rosemarie Stocky and others); "Dialogue Journals in the Writing Center: Fostering Fluency and Rapport" (Cheryl Hofstetter Towns); and "Beyond Tutoring: Expanding the Definition and Services of a High School Writing Center" (James Upton and S. Kay Gerlmann). (PRA)

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MIDWEST WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 1989

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MODELS, METHODS, AND MOVEMENTS: THE MULTI-FACETED WRITING CENTER

October 20-21
Clayton, Missouri

Clayton Plaza Holiday Inn

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Carmen Charleston

INNER-CITY WRITING CENTERS IN ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Success in Raising Achievement Scores in an Elementary School

The Writing Eenrichment Lab concept grew out of the Desegregation Plan for the City of St. Louis. It is a court-ordered program which was developed to provide 'enrichment labs'--additional resources to strengthen the educational programs for racially isolated schools--e.g. predominantly or all-Black schools. Labs were established in 1980 in approximately 60 schools, most of which were located in North St. Louis. School administration and staff had the option of choosing to have Reading, Math, Science, or Writing labs. Since Laclede School has Language Arts as its primary emphasis, we chose to have a writing lab.

The basic structure of the writing lab is that an entire class with its teacher will participate in lab experiences on a regular schedule--two or three times weekly. The homeroom teacher stays with the class for the entire period, working with the lab teacher in the instruction phase as a team. The team also includes a teaching assistant. Following development of learning plans, some students work with the lab teachers while others work with the classroom teacher and/or assistant. Other students work on independent projects.

Initially each lab teacher was responsible for the set-up, organization, course outline, objectives, curriculum, materials, scheduling, guidelines, evaluation, correlation and teacher-teaming cooperation. In other words, EVERYTHING!! Thus each lab is autonomous and unique in direct relation to the personality of the lead teacher.

My basis philosophy in the lab is that the students will have as many opportutnities as possible to write in as many different formats or genres as possible. They are not expected to master all of them at once but they will have experienced them. Philosophy translated: "We will write and write, and then we'll write some more."

Structure, consistency, and shared goals are the main ingredients for the success of the writing lab at Laclede School. Teacher cooperation, lesson coordination, enthusiasm, discipline, organization, interesting activities, knowledge of students' abilities and capabilities, and shared ideals of high teacher expectations, conducive learning environment, and emphasis on the ascquisition of a strong foundation in basic skills are all essential elements. The students at Laclede School, (a predominantly Black <99%>, inner city school), consistently achieve the highest ranking possible, (Outstanding on an Outstanding-Excellent-Good rating scale), on the St. Louis Public Schools' annual 3rd and 5th grades writing assessments. Also the achievement scores in language arts are well above the national average for Grades 1-5. (Ron Edmonds, Correlates of Effective Schools)

I normally have about thirteen different classes in Grades 1-5. Thirteen classes, 13 different teachers, 275-300 students coming in back-to-back classes, 5 or 6 sessions each day, 5 days a week. I have a 2-hour planning period each day which includes 30 minutes for lunch. This format is very different from being a regular classroom teacher. It requires a person with a very fexible personality who is able to deal with many people and one who loves children, adults, and teaching.

When classes come to the lab, we immediately begin on the day's lesson. I continuously monitor the students' work giving direct and immediate assistance with ideas, grammar, spelling, syntax, and/or mechanics. The classroom teacher and lab assistant provide the same type of help to the students. Moving around the room helps me to spend some time with each child, assess progress, diagnose weaknesses, provide immediate , positive feedback, and design remediation.

The organization and pace of the class must be planned and consistent. Lesson plans must be prepared and ready when the class arrives. The children like the structure and the security of knowing what to do and what is expected of them. The prinicpal of 'time-on-task' is practiced and adherred to.

An example of consistency of instruction was seen when we assessed the fact that different teachers were using variations of the identification heading that students wrote on their papers. The staff decided on a common heading for all students from 2nd grade up. The children learn the form once, and don't have to be anxious or relearn the basic style every time they go to a new teacher. A half-heading (name and date) is used in 1st grade and for practice work, etc. but the fact is that this practice teaches the children what we want all students to learn: "Always put your name and the date on your paper."

Name	Date
School	Grade - Room #

The basic language of instruction is consistent between classroom and lab in order to keep confusion regarding directions to a minimum.

Example: Identifying sentences by type

Teacher: What kind of sentence is "It is a ball."?

Response: "It is a ball" is a telling sentence and it requires a period.

Conversely for questions

Response: "Is it is a ball?" is an asking sentence and it requires a questions mark."

We use this approach in Grades 1 and 2 most often.

The concepts are repeated consistently throughout the school day with the hope that they will eventually become automatic responses and reactions. Repetitions by the group help to avoid embarassment to students who have not yet grasped the subject idea. It also reinforces the concept for the total group.

We encourage peer editing through exchange of papers, games, and checklists. Everybody participates from Grade 1 up. One of the children's favorite games is "One to Ten". They count to ten while

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I'm reading their paper. If they make it to ten without me finding a mistake--they win. I challenge them with this little verse:

When I play one-to-ten,
I always win!!

Of course, I don't always win, sometimes they really have papers that don't have errors on them, or at least, ones that I cannot find. But it's a lot of fun, everybody tries very hard, and they learn to be self-critical in a non-threatening way.

Every year we have our annual Scholas-Olympics in preparation for the system-administrated achievement test. We use sports-related names for the events, such as 'Spelling Sprint, Vocabulary Vault, Dictionary Dash, etc.' We post the names of the top three finalists on the walls. The children love to come up and see their names. They get place ribbons, certificates, and Olympic pins for the top finalists in each grade on Honors Day.

All student work is kept in folders in the lab for reference and review. This provides a longitudinal record for diagnosis, progress analysis, parent conferences, and evaluation of attainment and mastery of skills. Everyone gets to take all of their work home at the end of the school year.

GRADE 1

(1) Group lesson developed from correlation with curriuclum, season, or holiday themes. Then copied from the board. Basically four related sentences copied twice on paper. Subject: I saw __________ (on my way to school today); Animal Characteristics; Halloween; Wintertime, etc.

(2) Sentence comprehension is developed through lessons that require students to read and then answer yes-no questions using the words of the questions in their answers. This develops crictical reading skills as well as requiring answers to be in complete sentences. (Comprehension with the Billboard Bunch)

(3) Semantic mapping using familiar fairy tales helps to develop listening and thinking skills while being a prelude to book reporting.

(4) Each child makes a Pictionary which consists of number, color, and action words that they know. They draw pictures or cut them from magazines to illustrate their own [illegible] organizational skills, vocabulary,and gross and fine motor coordination. (Building a Sight Word Pictionary)

As the children become more adept with their writing skills, I encourage them to be creative by writing sentences of their own after they have completed the basic writing lesson for the day.

GRADE 2

(1) I use a structured-lesson format at this grade level and up. There is a controlled vocabulary used in sentence dictation which

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spirals into increasingly more difficult sentences. The creative part of the lesson includes the completion of an introductory statement from the student's own experience. E.g., "It makes me angry when ______________". (Write Way to Spell)

(2) I begin formal letter-writing instruction at this grade which includes instruction in the format and basic capitalization and punctuation required in a friendly letter. Students are required to write a real letter to a relative out-of-town or a famous person of their choosing. (Language Skills Step-by-Step Kit A)

(3) Group book reports are written with retelling of the main premise of the story in their own words. We try to do at least three of these. Recall of specific facts, sequencing, and logical and selective reasoning are some of the skills required.

(4) Learning to write short reports helps develop research skills using encyclopedia and dictionary. Critical reading for information and expanded knowledge base are introduced. (Learning to Write Short Reports)

(5) Each student keeps a personal dictionary which contains words that they consistently have difficulty spelling. It is a personal reference source that the student keeps and uses in class and brings to the lab also. The student adds words as the situation warrants--any word he wants to use and doesn't know how to spell is added to the dictionary for his own future reference. I start them out with a basic vocabulary from a commercial source but the dictionaries are truly individualized. (My Spelling Dictionary)

GRADE 3

(1) I use a structured-lesson format here that teaches the students to report what they observe; use details to describe; tell all the important things that must have happened; and decide on an appropriate ending. (Expressive Writing I)

(2) Starting at Grade 3, the students are asked to keep journals. Here, too, I use a structured format to guide them in their writing. The journal is considered to be personal and not for general sharing unless the writer so desires it. The journal is an out-of-class activity and is checked twice monthly. It is not graded. It is simply another opportunity to encourage the children to write. (My Writing Book)

(3) Letter writing is continued with the addition of the inside address format. Also two letters are required--one to a relative or friend and one to a famous person. (Language Skills Step-by-Step Kit B)

(4) Report Writing is also continued starting from a whole-group project to small group (4 students) to team (2) to individual projects. The students learn how to approach the subject, find answers and write them correctly in the cooperative learning situations and then are able to begin to work independently. (Writing Short Reports)

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(5) Beginning Dictionary Skills is required as an outside assignment. The students are given the assignments and are expected to have them completed by a certain time. They can complete them as quickly as they like or take as long as they like. This assignment is graded. (Beginning Dictionary Skills)

(6) They are required to keep a personal dictionary similar to the format in Grade 2. This is their personal reference source and they are expected to be customized for their individual use.

(7) Short Story Writing is introduced here as a group activity with all the students contributing and collaborating on a short story. Many tasks are involved including writing, editing, illustrating, publishing, reviewing, promotional advertising, and dramatizing.

GRADE 4

The activities and skills of the previous grades are maintained and extended in Grade 4. Structured lesson format, journals, letter writing, intermediate dictionary skills, personal dictionary, report writing. (Intermediate Dictionary Skills)

Grade 4 students develop a collection of biographical sketches about themselves which is used in the Pairing and Sharing Program. This book is sent to the 'Paired' school as a means of introduction for the students so that when they go on field trips the students will know something about each other.

The writing of formal research reports is required with little teacher direction using study skills techniques such as the encyclopedia, index, card catalog, unabridged dictionary, and atlas. While the reports are not extremely long, it is necessary for the students to locate the exact information needed, answer the questions asked, and write the report in an acceptable format. (Research Pleasers and Research Teasers)

Short story writing is done in small groups of eight, then smaller groups of four. This is usually a group effort with each group working on the whole project. Then the class decides which contributions of the various groups will be included in the final version of the story. We try to do this activity at least twice in class. Some students will write their stories outside of class and bring them in for critiquing and assistance by the teacher and/or the class.

GRADE 5

The emphasis in Grade 5 is on individual work and production. Each student is expected to be able to complete the required outside assignments with a minimum of direction and assistance from the teacher.

Letter writing moves into the arena of consumer education as each student is required to write a letter of complaint or compliment to an authentic business. Some students have received replies which usually include a reward of some type--from free product coupons to a whole case of the product.

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Students are required to totally publish a self-authored book, alphabet, picture, story, etc., complete with illustrations and sentences. Correct grammar, graphic placement, title page, appropriate illustrations and coloring are required. This project is graded and the best ones are entered in the Young Authors Conference for display. The books are also shared with younger classes as part of their in-class libraries and read-aloud activities.

At every grade students are encouraged to share their work through in-class recitation or copying and display. Students' work and ideas are sent to various magazines for possible publication. A recent, student-written article about the school-neighborhood garden was published in "Kid City" magazine, formerly "The Electric Company" magazine. Writing Contests are regularly entered. Laclede School students have won writing awards from the Aunts and Uncles organization, Herbert B. Turner Annual Writing Contest-St. Louis Public Schools, M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) and Say No to Drugs essay contests.

One student was a book reviewer for "Stone Soup" magazine. He wrote his letter of application, read the books, and then wrote his review of them. This is a prelude to career education and possible future employment.

We recently received computers in the school. We have two in Grades 3, 4, 5, and Kindergarten. The writing lab has 5 Apple IIgs and 2 Imagewriter printers. I attempt to see that fifteen of the students in every class get to spend at least fifteen minutes at the computer while they are in the writing lab. They must begin their work immediately and stop when the timer rings. They are learning keyboarding and also get to do speed exercises, play games, and compose stories. I use a variety of keyboarding programs and other software which is proving to be very effective and motivating. (Type of Learn)

While the enrichment lab is primarily for students in Grades 1-5, we have been able to mainstream several of the children from the Special Education Unit. The teacher determines at which level they are able to work and they come to the lab with an assigned class. I think this is very good for all of the students. It gives the children a better, more positive self image of themselves and provides an opportunity for them to learn the value of helping others and of being helped.

The Writing Enrichment Lab is an exciting place to work but it requires a great deal of time, energy, and patience. It is a place of consummate activity, learning, and growth.

(Carmen Charleston has been a teacher with the St. Louis Public Schools for 22 years and an instructor in the Writing Enrichment Lab Program since 1980.)

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Marilyn Cozad

Non-traditional Students in the Writing Lab

Non-traditional students are becoming a larger part of the future of higher education. At Morningside College full-time, non-traditional students numbered 125 in 1987; in 1989 they jumped almost one third to 169. In addition, there are many more part-time nontraditional students. These nontrads represent a large and diverse group. By learning to serve the various needs of these students, writing centers help insure the success of these high risk students and help create graduates who are confident in their writing ability.

The majority of beginning nontrads seem to be overwhelmed by college. Because of their responsibilities, these students are accustomed to making sacrifices, working overtime, and forgetting to think about themselves. Family and finances almost always carry a higher priority than academics for these students. Because of the natural priority of these responsibilities, these students begin classes with more stress than the traditional student. As a part of the Learning Center at Morningside I have the title of Writing Specialist. I also work as a classroom teacher, counselor, and sponsor for nontrad students. My job becomes one of helping these students find ways to reduce stress and succeed at all of their tasks.

Many times in the writing tutorials the problems that older students express are related to different problems in their lives. For example, a student may complain of writer's block, but actually lack the time to think things out. This generally happens with a first term student who is trying to manage a full load of classes without having shared or eliminated any household or family duties. Through counseling, students can see ways to eliminate some duties, shorten others, study at odd hours, and use nonproductive time (like commuting) to their advantage.

Nontrads may feel just as lonely and forlorn as any homesick teenager. Their lives are changing. There may be divorce, a death in the family, or loss of employment. Another isolating factor could be the response of the family and friends to the changes they see in a student. All this may make the nontrad more determined to do things independently, and they may have difficulty in cooperating with others at times.

If the nontrad is married, spousal support can be crucial. If the spouse feels threatened by the changes in the student, or by the changes in their homelife, the spouse may make college difficult if not impossible for the student. The spouse who becomes a hindrance is usually won over, ignored, or divorced. Occasionally a spouse becomes so demanding that the nontrad withdraws from school. On the other hand the supportive spouse can also unwittingly cause stress. This spouse may emphasize the grade rather than the learning. This spouse may be anxious for the mate to finish so their collective income can be increased.

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A primary academic characteristic of nontrads is their anxiety over writing. Many of these students have written nothing more than a note here and there or a grocery list since high school. They perceive their grammar and punctuation skills to be poor. In some cases they are right. For students with serious writing problems, our center suggests our support course in Basic Writing before they go into the required freshman composition course. But most nontrads find that a brief review or self-help course will give them the confidence they need. For the student with rusty but workable skills, work in the center is valuable.

Some nontrads are confident in their ideas but panic over grammar and punctuation. Instead of letting ideas flow onto paper, they are overly concerned with punctuation and grammar until they have lost the freshness of their ideas. One sophomore nontrad, who had done well in freshman composition, has convinced himself that he lacks the ability to write anything for his other classes. He works regularly with a staff member to gain confidence in his ability.

Often nontrad students see their academic skills as inadequate. Therefore they will try to make up in quantity what they think is lacking in quality. It is not unusual to see a beginning nontrad do twice as much work as is required for an assignment. For example, in my Composition and Rhetoric class, I asked the students to write a short essay

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on one of two questions from their books, and to write the essay in their journals. All five of the nontrads, without consulting one another, wrote the essays for both questions, put them in their journals, and prepared copies to be handed in during class. Not one of the seventeen traditional students did this.

Occasionally an older student will be adamant that they have nothing of interest to write about. They regard their wisdom and experience as nothing more than part of their past. If the student has a serious writing block I will help the student to select a specific topic. Most nontrads do have interesting experiences to write about; they just don't recognize it. One nontrad spent almost an hour trying to come up with an idea for an assignment about her childhood. I had asked every standard question I could think of when I finally said, "Don't you remember anything exciting from your childhood that you might tell your children?" She sat for a while longer and finally said, "Well, when I was nine my mother took my brothers and me and we crossed the Mekong River to freedom." What followed was a fascinating story of a Laotian woman who took her family from the turmoil of Southeast Asia to a refugee camp, then on to Alaska, where she made a new home for them. When I asked the nontrad why she didn't come up with this earlier she said, "It's just part of my family history. I didn't think anyone would care."

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Sometimes an older student is not intellectually gifted. Perseverance is everything to these students. It is important to encourage them without giving them false hope, and without doing their work for them. The student needs to feel self-esteem, but independence from the writing center staff also needs to be encouraged. This situation demands tact, discipline and caring on the part of staff members.

With all of the problems of nontrads, it seems amazing that they succeed at all. Actually they have many things in their favor.

Maturity and experience give many nontrads a positive attitude. More often than not, they are determined to overcome their shortcomings and be successful in their education. When older students become more confident in their skills, they also take on a new attitude which becomes, "What can I learn from you?" They become highly motivated and willing to accept challenge and criticism. These students become involved with learning and building their skills. Their confidence is contagious. I often hear them say to others, "I did it. You can too." As their confidence builds, a nontrad becomes a delight to have in the classroom. Nontrads question material that the traditional student passively accepts. They develop a sense of humor about themselves and their past. As they become more confident they write about their mistakes and triumphs, and share their writing with traditional students.

Nontrads have a high attendance rate. They want to be in the classroom. They seem to feel an emotional, as well as financial commitment, they have made to themselves, their education and their future.

As non-traditional students become a larger part of the college population the writing center becomes more important. The nontrads see the center as a place they can express ideas, get help, solve problems and learn about themselves and their possiblities.

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE WRITING CENTER AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Coralyn Dahl and Rita Worrall

For several years Indiana State University has sustained an excellent relationship between the writing center and its program of Student Support Services. The cooperation between these two campus agencies has made it possible to increase tutoring services to students who have come needing and desiring help. Such a relationship has required coordination and collaborative effort, but it has enhanced both the Writing Center's and the Support Service's programs.

The Student Support Services Project at Indiana State University is a federally funded program designed to provide academic support services to 400 eligible students. Eligibility criteria includes first generation, (students whose parents have not graduated with a four-year Bachelor's degree), low income, learning disabled, and physically handicapped students. The major components of the project are tutorial services, and writing and mathematics classroom instruction.

A major problem area for our students is that of English grammar and composition. Lack of skills in this academic area creates a major block to success. Based on SAT verbal scores of 350 or below, approximately 40% of program participants are placed in the basic freshman developmental English composition course at Indiana State. We have found that few first-semester participants in the support service program have had formal English composition training previous to their arrival at Indiana State. For many, the initial assignment in their introductory composition course represents the first time they have been required to write an organized paper of any kind.

One-on-one tutoring has been found to be most effective in increasing retention rates for the targeted groups served by Student Support Services. This is especially true for the learning disabled and non-traditional students who are impeded by lack of confidence or low self-esteem.

The Student Support Services grant requires that paid tutors be available to assist freshman participants in undergraduate general education courses and some specialized upper level courses for continuing students. Tutoring for the bulk of these courses takes place in the Student Support Services suite of offices. However, due to the specialized nature of tutoring in the writing courses, English majors have been hired specifically as writing tutors located in the English department's writing center under the supervision of Student Support Service writing specialist and the director of the writing center.

From the perspective of the administration of a federally funded program, this coordination with another department has three major benefits for the program and its participants.

I. EXPANDED SERVICES

One of the most important advantages of this cooperation for the Student Support Service program is the ability to expand services and facility resources in spite of a limited budget. The additional use of the Writing Center and it's equipment allows tutorial services to be provided to a great number of students on an individual basis without increased expenditures.

II. ENHANCEMENT OF TUTORIAL SERVICES

All tutors hired by Student Support Services must be qualified in their subject fields with a 3.0 or higher G.P.A. Tutors with specific majors are hired to tutor in those courses, but they should also possess a well-rounded general education background to assist with those courses. The writing tutors comprise both undergraduate and graduate students, the majority of whom are English majors or have a proficiency in English grammar. All tutors receive in-depth training and evaluation from both the director of the writing center and the Student Support Service writing specialist. Participants not only receive expertise related to specialized composition courses, but also technical assistance with papers required in diverse academic courses.

III. DOCUMENTATION AND MONITORING

The Student Support Service writing specialist documents services and monitors participant's progress according to a personalized system that satisfies reporting requirements for both the academic department and the federal government. Attendance in classroom instruction and English tutorial sessions are reported as separate components that can also be analyzed for correlation with retention rates. Service records and progress reports are filed as part of a complete academic profile on each Student Support Service participant.

From the standpoint of the writing center of Indiana State University, which is funded by the English department, the use of funds provided by Student Support Service to hire tutors has markedly increased the volume of students who are tutored and has enabled the Center to meet the needs of all students seeking help. This is quite a change over the years when only two or three writing center tutors could be hired because of lack of funding. At that time, the tutors often had to conduct group tutorials in order to serve the students who needed the tutoring service. With many tutors supplied by Student Support Services, all tutorials are now conducted on a one-to-one basis and the instruction is much more effective.

One of the best collaborative efforts between the two agencies is working with non-traditional students. In our university we are seeing a rapid increase in the enrollment of these students, and they are eager to learn and achieve. Many seek the aid of the writing center as it has been many years since they have had a writing course. Often they confide in their tutor that they are unsure of themselves in other courses. At that point we can refer them to the services of Student Support Services which provides tutoring in most major subject areas. With both agencies involved, we are able to monitor their progress and help them in areas in which they may be falling behind. For many non-traditional students, both men and women, our two programs are their life-line and support for the time that they are in college, especially during their first year back in school. We have also been able to acquaint them with services that they did not know the university provided and give them a measure of security in a situation which at first appears frightening and threatening. This cooperation between the writing center and Student Support Services has enhanced the status of both programs, as these non-traditional students are eager to tell other students and professors of the help they received.

Another important advantage of our cooperation is that the support service program allows the director and writing specialist of the writing center to hire their own tutors using the criteria of both the writing center and the federal program. Tutors are tested and evaluated by the writing center's administrative personnel, therefore eliminating any conflict or separation of duties or expectations between support service tutors and English-funded tutors.

The writing specialist in the writing center is provided through the Student Support Service federal grant, but serves the English department and the writing center by teaching three sections of developmental freshman composition as well as tutoring and serving the writing center in a supervisory capacity.

There are some disadvantages to such a relationship from the perspective of the writing center personnel, and one of those is record keeping. It does involve precise records and reports as each session much be verifiable to meet federal guidelines. This takes time and continued diligence. Another disadvantage is that the tutors under the federal grant are able to work only with students that fall under the criteria set forth in the grant. At Indiana State University, we have found these disadvantages a small price to pay for the many advantages that this cooperation gives.

This unique coordination of services between the Student Support Services project and the writing center at Indiana State University has proven to be most beneficial to all parties involved. During a time of educational budget constraints, with demand for services to students increasing, coordination among university departments is imperative as a cost-effective method to ensure equal opportunity for academic success. This coordination works only when a university community builds relationships based on a caring attitude with the student as it first priority. Indiana State is that university community.

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Evaluating A Writing Center:
A Self-Study Guide

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The development, proliferation and use of Writing Centers in recent years has occurred at a rate seldom seen in higher education; North (28) estimated not too long ago that there are approximately 1500 Writing Centers now in operation. These centers can be found in high schools, at two-year colleges, and on most large university campuses; they have been described as "indispensable adjuncts to many university writing programs" Olson (vii).

Recent public and legislative demands for increased accountability in higher education and cries for the assessment of learning outcomes have begun to focus attention on the costs and benefits associated with Writing Center activities. Yet, surprisingly little is known about how to assess these programs and their activities. In an article entitled "Evaluating a Writing Lab," Neuleib (227) has suggested, "The first problem that (writing) lab personnel need to face when considering evaluation techniques is that the process of evaluation is not at all easy." Neuleib went on to suggest that this difficulty is created by the fact that (1) there is no established method for going about the evaluation and (2) there is no established structure for the report to take. In 1984, Olson edited a nineteen chapter volume entitled *Writing Centers: Theory and Administration* for the National Council of Teachers of English; none of the chapters in this otherwise excellent work discussed the assessment or evaluation of a writing center. In fact, only seven titles among the 235 books, dissertations, unpublished manuscripts, and published articles contained in the text's bibliography appear to address writing center assessment or evaluation.

The present paper describes issues and procedures to consider when planning a Writing Center assessment project. Harris (2) has suggested that "Like snowflakes and fingerprints, every writing lab shares generic similarities with all other writing labs, yet remains unique." Therefore, the following recommendations are not offered as rules to be employed in all assessment projects; rather, they are designed as thought provokers and discussion stimulators.

Asking the Right Questions

Central to the task of asking the right questions is recognition of the essential difference between assessment and evaluation. For purposes of the present discussion, assessment will refer to the thoughtful and systematic collection of information or data. Used in this fashion, assessment of Writing Center activities is typically descriptive in nature. Evaluation, on the other hand, refers to human judgments (positive or negative) made about Writing Center programs or activities. Evaluation of Writing Center operations might include judgments of demonstrated usefulness, relative efficiency, estimated cost effectiveness, etc. Though "assessment" and "evaluation" are often used interchangeably in daily speech, strikingly different procedures must be used in their implementation.

Identification of questions essential to the assessment of a Writing Center's operation depends largely upon the specific desires and/or needs of the person or institution commissioning the assessment. For example, an assessment project designed primarily to satisfy the requirements of an external funding agency might well need to examine different types of questions than an internally initiated self-study assessment designed primarily for program improvement. In the former instance, close attention to criteria imposed by the funding agency must be given; in the latter situation, far greater freedom in assessment goals and methods will prevail. As noted by Neuleib (227) previously, there is no established method or structure that the assessment report must take.

Figure 1 presents a suggested "Writing Center Self-Study Checklist" for conducting an assessment project. The five general areas considered in this process are (1) goals and objectives, (2) Writing Center services, (3) qualifications and training of staff, (4) resources and funding, and (5) program evaluation; discussion of each follows.

Insert Figure 1 Here

Close examination of the "Writing Center Self-Study Checklist" reveals that some items (e.g., I A, II A, III A, IV A, and V A) address assessment issues (i.e., they are primarily descriptive in nature); the remaining items are largely evaluative in nature (i.e., they require that personal judgments be made). Assessment information is often best collected and summarized by the Writing Center staff. Evaluative judgments, on the other hand, can be made either by the Writing Center staff or by knowledgeable external consultants.

Identification of Writing Center goals and objectives is a vital first step in any assessment program. Oftentimes, these goals and objectives were first described in the written proposal (or grant application) that led to the Center's creation; it is important to remember, however, that it is common practice to modify significant statements describing anticipated goals and objectives after a Writing Center's creation or after its initial year of operation. The clarity, the comprehensiveness, and the consistency of these goals and objectives with the institution's educational priorities, should all be reviewed carefully. The degree to which the Writing Center staff fully know and understand these goals and objectives should also be investigated--this is especially true in settings which employ graduate or undergraduate tutors for short time periods. For example, tutors may unknowingly place too much emphasis on correcting easy-to-spot composition errors in a Writing Center whose primary instructional goals are to help students overcome writing blocks and to learn ways to express their thoughts in writing.

Recognizing the distinction between assessment and evaluation is especially important when reviewing the degree to which available Writing Center services address adequately the stated goals and objectives. For example, one potentially useful assessment activity is to "count" such things as the number of hours the Center is open each week, the total number of students served by the staff, or the number of faculty who have referred students to the Center. When conducting this type of assessment, it is important that all activities and services are described in a comprehensive fashion. Assessment here might also examine the degree to which these services are known by students, faculty and staff. On some campuses, the talents and capabilities of the Writing Center staff to improve student writing are obscured by the staff's ineffectiveness in publicizing their services to those who would benefit most from the program. Creating appropriate publicity material is not the only problem that must be addressed. Each freshman class brings new students to campus who did not see "last year's posters or the article series that appeared in the student newspaper;" to be effective, publicity campaigns on college campuses must be repeated annually.

Evaluation of Writing Center services might also consider other accomplishments that are far more difficult to document such as how skillful the tutors are at helping students and how well the students write as a result. In this instance, evaluation will examine the degree to which the Center's instructional goals are actually realized (i.e., achieved) rather than the degree to which services are utilized.

Assessment of Center services should not be limited to an examination of existing activities and services; the primary focus of attention should be meeting broad-based student needs. Thus, an "eye to the future" and a "vision of what might be" should follow a review of existing activities.

An honest examination of the qualifications and training of the Writing Center staff is another important element of a comprehensive assessment program. In some institutions, this will be a major strength of the program; in other settings, it will become clear that professional development activities are genuinely needed. Two important questions that might be considered include: "Have staff members been trained in recent advances in teaching writing, or are they faculty with reputations for writing well and caring about students?" and, "Have staff members attended regional conferences for Writing Center professionals?"

The use of peer tutors as Writing Center staff is well documented in the published research literature. One should ask, "How well trained is the trainer of these tutors?" and, "What skill training do the tutors receive?" For some of the best information about the use and training of peer tutors, consult Beck, Hawkins and Silver (1978), Bruffee (1980), Harris, (1982), Olson (1984), and Podis (1980).

Assessment of Writing Centers should also consider the instructional resources (e.g., journals) contained in the Writing Center and the use these materials receive (e.g., Do staff members regularly meet to discuss recent articles describing ways to do things better?). Locally produced resources should also be reviewed; Almasy (400-403) described how one Writing Center made excellent use of locally produced learning modules.

A careful examination of the human resources, physical resources and fiscal resources needed to accomplish the program's stated short- and long-range goals should also be made. A comparison between the resources needed to achieve these goals and the resources actually received by the Writing Center, on an annual basis, should then be prepared. Included in a Writing Center self-assessment should be suggested ways to secure needed additional resources.

Last, but certainly not least, is the issue of program evaluation. An ongoing program of self-assessment will provide the Writing Center staff an excellent way to document accomplishments and to justify requests for additional resources. Annual self-assessments also provide the least threatening approach to identifying areas needing improvement; highly specific action plans for program enhancement can then be developed. The possible use of an external consultant to supplement the self-assessment activities of the Writing Center staff might also be considered using a costs/benefits approach.

Designing Assessment Strategies

The design and selection of assessment strategies follow the identification of specific assessment questions. Though there are no clear rules that must be adhered to rigidly, the following suggestions are, however, helpful.

The first suggestion is to compare all Writing Center activities and achievements directly to the program's designated goals and objectives rather than to the operation of Writing Centers on other comparable campuses. Though there will always be some who continue to favor "norm or comparative" referenced evaluation, recent advances in program evaluation favor the use of "criterion referenced" approaches--evaluate each program accomplishment and each shortcoming relative to stated Writing Center goals and objectives.

A related suggestion is to remember that well designed, locally developed assessment devices are more likely to adequately answer your institution's specific assessment needs than externally prepared instruments. While it is tempting to seek "nationally normed tests," or to "borrow" survey instruments found in the published literature in an effort to avoid "reinventing the wheel," (e.g., Harris, 1982, and Olson, 1984 provide several such examples) it should be remembered that these assessment devices were designed originally to measure someone else's "wheel." In most instances, it is preferable to create "original" surveys, tests, and other assessment devices that are both sensitive to the peculiarities of your institutional context and responsive to your specific assessment goals and objectives.

In general, multiple assessment strategies are preferable to single assessment measures. For example, when measuring "satisfaction," it is preferable to gather satisfaction data from as many different sources as possible: e.g., clients or users of the Writing Center, faculty who have referred specific students to the Writing Center, additional faculty from both within the English Department as well as those faculty teaching in other disciplines, and counselors and/or student services staff members. Interpretation of such data (i.e., evaluation) can be difficult when "mixed" opinions are offered--is it better to count "success stories" or to "document disappointments?" While the former is certain to please both the institution's administration and the Writing Center's staff, the latter may be more helpful to the design of future plans.

Efforts to document Writing Center benefits that examine specific, identifiable student outcomes (e.g., improvement in drafts of a particular writing assignment, acquisition of specific writing skills, changes in attitudes towards writing) are more likely to be successful than assessment strategies which employ global or broad-based outcome measures (e.g., retention statistics, overall grade point averages, number of subsequent English courses taken). On first glance, both types of assessment strategies seem intuitively useful; one must consider, however, whether it is reasonable to expect the relatively few hours spent by a student in a Writing Center to reduce withdrawal rates from school or raise grades in three, four, or five courses (especially when many courses do not emphasize, or even employ, writing assignments).

In most instances, an institutionally useful Writing Center assessment must be thorough and comprehensive. Thus, the assessment should identify both the services currently provided, as well as those services not provided. Similarly, when surveys of user satisfaction are contemplated, surveys of non-users should similarly be planned. When assessing faculty views, surveys should be sent to all faculty (i.e., both full-time and part-time faculty). In short, to enhance project credibility, one cannot be too thorough.

Much research on writing, and the teaching of writing, clearly needs to be done. North (28), for example, reported that "there is not a single published study of what happens in writing center tutorials." Activities designed to assess Writing Center accomplishments should not, however, be confused with this much needed basic research. One need not be an expert in educational research to adequately assess a Writing Center's operation; conversely, many carefully controlled research studies investigating the writing improvement process will yield little information needed to assess a particular Writing Center. In all fairness to those who work in Writing Centers, it should be noted that there are an inordinate number of methodological difficulties to overcome when conducting the type of carefully controlled research studies that North (28) would most like to see. Kail and Allen (233-245) provide an excellent introduction to the neophyte investigator interested in "Conducting Research in the Writing Lab;" an especially useful annotated bibliography appears with this article.

A final recommendation for the design of assessment strategies is to remember the Murphy's Law which states "Everything takes longer than it takes." The planning and design of a successful assessment program will be a time consuming activity for the most talented of faculty; the collection and analysis of assessment data is certain to encounter "unforeseen delays;" and the preparation of a clear and comprehensive assessment report is certain to challenge the writing skills of the author.

Developing Assessment Materials

Forms used to assess Writing Center activities have appeared occasionally in the published literature (e.g., Harris, 1976, 23-27; Harris, 1982, 278-294; Olson, 1984, 95-99). Olson (163-164) also describes a survey of student attitudes toward Writing Center referrals. Though samples such as these might provide useful background information, the Writing Center staff should anticipate that they will have to create "original" assessment forms. For technical assistance in designing and conducting surveys, consult Alreck and Settle (1985), Babbie (1973), Bradburn, Sudman, and Associates (1979), and Warwick and Lininger (1975).

Locating Help and Assistance

Though the published research literature is scant, many sources of assessment help and assistance are potentially available on most college and university campuses. For example, survey design is often taught in psychology, sociology, marketing, and education classes; faculty expertise in research methodology, statistical analysis, and program evaluation can similarly be found in many departments across the campus. The Writing Center staff can constructively use their need for assessment assistance to help build close collaborative relationships with faculty colleagues in a number of different disciplines.

Talented students can also assist in Writing Center assessment projects. For example, telephone surveys and other labor intensive forms of data collection can be completed by student volunteers or workers. It should be remembered that Writing Centers often call upon undergraduate students to serve as peer tutors; their potential to assist in assessment projects should not be overlooked. Graduate students, in search of thesis and dissertation topics, should also be encouraged to pursue assessment-based research investigations of Writing Center activities.

When should an external consultant be employed? Reports prepared by external consultants are most frequently used to satisfy institutional promises made in grant applications or for large institutional self-studies. Another appropriate use of an external consultant is to provide the type of assessment that in-house experts cannot effectively complete. For example, when the harsh realities of institutional politics interfere with accurate assessment, an external consultant's report can "rush in where even tenured faculty fear to tread." Probably, the most beneficial use of an external consultant occurs when an assessment has been prompted by the staff of the Writing Center. In such instances, a knowledgeable and empathic consultant can provide valuable feedback and identify areas for further development.

Conclusions

Though Writing Center assessment has been largely ignored in the published literature, it should no longer escape thoughtful attention from Writing Center staff. Ideas and recommendations contained in this self-assessment guide can provide the "initial draft blueprint" for an assessment program; each suggestion should be reviewed carefully and modified to fit appropriately into a particular institutional context. Approached in this fashion, assessment is both manageable and beneficial.

Figure I
Writing Center Self-Study Checklist

I. **Goals and Objectives**
   - A. What are the Writing Center's (a) short term goals and objectives, and (b) long term goals and objectives?
   - B. To what degree are the Writing Center's goals and objectives consistent with the institution's educational mission and current instructional priorities?
   - C. To what degree are the Writing Center's goals and objectives clearly stated?
   - D. To what degree are the Writing Center's goals and objectives comprehensive in nature?

II. **Writing Center Services**
   - A. What services does the Writing Center currently provide?
   - B. To what degree are the Writing Center's goals and objectives adequately reflected in the services actually provided?
   - C. To what degree are the Writing Center's services known by students, faculty, and staff?
   - D. To what degree are the Writing Center's services currently used by student, faculty and staff?
   - E. To what degree are the Writing Center's clients satisfied with services currently provided?
   - F. What additional services should the Writing Center provide to adequately address its goals and objectives?

III. **Qualifications and Training of Staff**
   - A. What are the qualifications of the Writing Center staff?
   - B. To what degree are the staff of the Writing Center qualified to provide the services they offer?
   - C. To what degree are the resources provided to the staff of the Writing Center to facilitate their professional growth and development?
   - D. If students (undergraduate or graduate) serve as peer tutors or writing consultants, what training do these paraprofessionals receive?

IV. **Resources and Funding**
   - A. What resources and funds are currently provided to the Writing Center?
   - B. To what degree are adequate human resources provided to the Writing Center to enable it to achieve its goals and objectives?
   - C. To what degree are adequate physical resources (e.g., space, equipment) provided to the Writing Center to enable it to achieve its goals and objectives?
   - D. To what degree are adequate fiscal resources provided to the Writing Center to enable it to achieve its goals and objectives?
   - E. What additional resources are needed by the Writing Center to achieve (a) its short term goals, and (b) its long term goals?

V. **Program Evaluation**
   - A. What type of self-evaluation of the Writing Center program currently takes place?
   - B. To what degree does this self-evaluation adequately assess user (i.e., student, faculty, staff) satisfaction?
   - C. To what degree does this self-evaluation adequately assess student learning outcomes?
   - D. To what degree does this self-evaluation provide a cost/benefit analysis?
   - E. To what degree are external evaluators needed to supplement the findings of the self-evaluation program?

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The Tutor/Faculty Partnership: It's Required

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New writing tutors wonder what role they will play, what it means to be a tutor. They have some notion about tutoring: sitting down with a student and talking about writing--particularly the student's. And of course they are right as far as that fuzzy image goes. They have been selected partly because they have the sensitivity, maturity, and competence to assist their peers by helping them carefully scrutinize a paper at hand and by offering strategies for re-organization and revision. But at Lawrence their perception of the writing tutor's role quickly begins to change from the relatively isolated context of the student's writing problems to the broader one of the faculty's commitment to improve the writing skills of their students. The basis for the change is the requirement that tutors work closely with faculty. The effect is a growing sense of partnership, of collaboration, which has both improved and expanded the tutoring program.

While a close working relationship between tutors and faculty is not unique to Lawrence, two conditions perhaps have made this a uniquely conducive atmosphere. Lawrence is a small university, with approximately 1200 students and 114 faculty, which prides itself on the personal academic relationships easily developed between students and instructors. Student tutors have enjoyed the individual attention of faculty in their own coursework, and it is the faculty who, by their recommendations, have selected potential candidates for tutoring positions. The second condition is the honor code, which Lawrence instituted over twenty-five years ago to insure openness and trust in academic affairs. The honor code, which simply states that students may not "unfairly advance" their own academic performance or "intentionally limit or impede" another's, has given rise to guidelines and procedures for tutoring which are distinctly advantageous, which, in fact, make the tutor/faculty partnership a condition of tutoring.

In our Writing Lab, any student who seeks tutorial assistance with a paper for a course must first get permission from the instructor. The instructor must sign a student (or faculty) referral form and designate the dates of the tutoring period. Students may not simply "walk in" to the Writing Lab and receive help on an assigned paper. While this procedure may seem unduly restrictive or even discouraging from the perspective of many writing centers, from the perspective of our Writing Lab the requirement augments the role of the tutor. Faculty construe tutoring, which is often long-term and which addresses several aspects of the student's writing, as an extension of their own responsibility to student. Since the faculty member may, of course, deny the student's request for tutoring--not sign the form--or may even reject a particular tutor (neither has happened in my experience), his or her signature represents the sanctioning (possibly the initiation) of the tutorial. The faculty member understands that she or he is including a third party, the tutor, in the teacher/student relationship and by that inclusion acknowledges both trust and confidence in the arrangement; the tutor understands that he or she has a responsibility to devise tutoring strategies in accordance with the instructor's expectations and assessments.

Once the referral (self or faculty) has been made, I assign a tutor to work with the student--and the instructor. The tutor meets with the instructor, usually before, but on occasion after, a session with the student, to discuss the particular needs of the student, to clarify the assignment, and to jointly establish appropriate objectives for the tutorials. Frequently, this or subsequent meetings will include the student, especially if matters of content--ideas and text analysis--must be discussed. In addition to periodic meetings, the tutors submit written reports to the instructor which summarize tutorial progress, and the instructors often respond in kind with suggestions and encouragement. (For a fine discussion of these same procedures and the development of a tutor's ethical consciousness, see Herek and Niquette, "Ethics in the Writing Lab: Tutoring Under the Honor Code," in the proceedings of the Midwest Writing Centers Association Conference 1988.)

The tutor's role, then, is defined to some extent by the instructor with whom he or she is working in light of specified objectives and the continual exchange among the student, the tutor, and the instructor. The instructor's own commitment to the improvement of the student as a writer (as well as the student's academic success in the course) is shared with, and by, the writing tutor. The arrangement is required--and institutionally stipulated by the honor code. But there is more to the partnership than may be apparent in these procedures.

Lawrence does not have a traditional first year composition course. Instead, all freshmen must take Freshman Studies, a two-term course (Lawrence has an academic year of three ten-week terms) which focuses on "great works," including literature, philosophy, science, music, and art. Professors from all disciplines teach sections of about fifteen students. Typically, the classes are conducted as discussion seminars and emphasize critical thought and writing about the works. Each term, the students write three 5-6 page essays and two shorter papers, and re-write one (although many instructors will allow, or demand, more revisions). The composition component of the course is therefore substantial, and students must demonstrate (or develop) clear, coherent writing styles while they grapple with analyses of the works.

In 1987, the Freshman Studies Committee, which reviews the course each year, recommended that the faculty give more attention to the improvement of students' writing abilities. Before then, most tutoring for freshmen was restricted to mechanics and the rudiments of sentence structure, but the initiatives of the committee resulted in a consensus that the course faculty work more closely with the Writing Lab. The perception of the Writing Lab, and of the peer tutoring staff, changed. In that first year, the number of referrals (both self and faculty) doubled over the average of the four previous years, and they doubled again the second year--a 400% increase in two years.

As a consequence of the committee's recommendations, a writing tutor is assigned to each of the twenty-one sections of the course. The "section tutor" follows the same procedures of conferences and reporting as do those tutors not involved in the Freshman Studies program, but the tutor's relationship to the instructor, and therefore the role the tutor plays, has some significant differences. The section tutor must establish his or her identity as an adjunct to the instructor. The tutor meets with the instructor at the beginning of the term--before any referrals--to discuss writing assignments, the instructor's expectations of the students (perhaps the grading criteria) and marking system, and especially the benefits of peer tutoring. The tutor is particularly interested in the instructor's approach to the course, the philosophy which underlies the goals he or she has set for the students. When the instructor can articulate whether he or she will emphasize, for instance, the broad themes of the works, their historical context, close reading and comparative analysis, or personal interpretation, and what he or she considers a good student essay (an "A" paper), the tutor will be able to make judgments about the students' work from the same perspective. More difficult to explain but ultimately of greater importance are the instructor's speculations about how the student produces the good paper, i.e., the process of reaching the goal. Knowing this (an understanding which may evolve over weeks of discussion) the tutor can help the student give the professor what he or she wants: an ability to construct critical essays appropriate for more advanced college courses. The tutor can, over the term, gradually move the student's writing closer to the "ideal" defined by the instructor. Some instructors teach specific designs for structuring argumentative and analytical essays (as do most composition teachers). For others, the process is not as much the pedagogy, although the demands may be as great. All expect logical organization and clear prose. The tutor and instructor together, therefore, examine the instructor's approach and the unique extension to the teaching of writing which the tutor can provide. The tutor also meets the class and extends his or her personal wish to assist the students with their writing over the term. Through these initial contacts, the tutor becomes better prepared for the tutorial sessions to come, and the tutor sees his or her role from the perspective of assisting students as writers, not just of helping them through specific papers.

This perspective becomes all the more clear given the continuity of most Freshman Studies tutoring. With the first paper, the instructors identify students with major writing problems and refer them to the section tutor. Other students whose papers do not meet their own or the instructor's expectations refer themselves. The tutor, therefore, usually meets with a student weekly for virtually the entire term. The tutor and instructor determine the specific aspects of the student's writing that need attention, perhaps establishing priorities, and discuss more holistic approaches to developing the student's writing skills. When a second paper is assigned, the tutor addresses those concerns in the context of the paper. But the tutor and student begin tutorials immediately and often work outside that context. The tutor will use the resources of the Writing Lab or prepare relevant examples and exercises, or perhaps guide the student through revisions of previously graded papers. The tutor, then, has a responsibility to try to motivate the student to study and practice writing during those weeks when papers are not due (the student's recognition of the tutor/faculty partnership helps). When papers are due, the tutor will typically restructure the sessions--and meet more often--in order to focus on the process of writing: to explore what that means for the individual student and engage the student in critical revisions. Other characteristics of tutoring aside, this personal attention to the student's consciousness as a writer, and the discipline which the tutor imposes, may ultimately be of greatest value.

For students with basic writing problems (e.g., some ESL students) the consistent development their writing skills would not be possible without the writing tutor, for the Freshman Studies instructor is not teaching a composition course per se, and, except for those in a few disciplines, does not have the time, nor ready access to resources for writing instruction.

The Writing Lab partnership with the Freshman Studies program, therefore, represents a change in the perception of peer tutoring. Faculty, for the most part, share with their tutors the responsibility for developing their students as writers. And that does not mean faculty abdicate the responsibility. Rather, they appreciate the distinct advantages of the peer tutorial relationship and take the initiative to include it as a dimension of writing instruction. As a result, tutors are bettered prepared and more motivated. They receive guidance and encouragement from the instructor, and reciprocate by giving their own analyses of the student's difficulties and progress--and, of course, by giving their time to the student.

At the least, the partnership of Freshman Studies tutors and instructors improves individual tutorials. But there is another aspect of this relationship which again alters the perception of the role of peer tutors. While not all faculty have seen the section tutor as potentially more than someone who works closely with particular students, some have--and have expanded the meaning of tutoring.

Since the section tutor is working in the context of a course, his or her role may be interpreted more extensively as the instructor addresses the needs of groups of students, even the entire class. For instance, instructors will ask tutors to provide explanatory materials on specific elements of writing, e.g., handouts on the use of semicolons and commas, examples of introductory paragraphs, explanations of logical fallacies. Some include their tutors in class discussions of writing in the course. For instance, an instructor who uses a particularly rigid model for structuring essays (and expects his students to use it) has his tutor assist him during special sessions with students who have problems understanding the design; the tutor works with members of the class as they practice using the new structure.

A practical alternative to individual tutoring (and certainly to class presentation) for assisting a few students with a common writing problem is small group tutoring. A tutor or instructor (usually just after reading a set of papers) may identify three to five students who need examples and practice in, say, writing thesis statements, avoiding comma-splices, citing sources, and the like. The tutor acquires appropriate materials from the Writing Lab, gets the students together, and conducts a group session. This form of tutorial assistance clearly makes good sense and, increasingly, faculty are seeing the advantages of having their section tutors hold group sessions. Besides offering instruction in the mechanics of writing, tutors also work on writing skills in ways composition teachers have used for years. For instance, to prepare a small group tutorial on introductions, a tutor collected the most recent papers of the participants and made copies to serve as examples and to facilitate group discussion. The students, of course, did not stop with a glance at each other's introductions; they discussed whole papers: the ideas, the organization, diction, style, possible revisions. The opportunity to work together with a peer tutor became a comfortable and enlightening experience of peer critiquing.

A final (though certainly not exhaustive) example of the expanded role of the tutor--one which perhaps serves as an epitome of the tutor/faculty partnership: A professor who has taught the Freshman Studies course for years, who enjoys personal discussions with his students and who is remarkably dedicated to the improvement of his students' writing, decided to involve his section tutor in every aspect of writing instruction. Kristin, the tutor, participated in the instructor's conferences with the students (with every student for all the papers) and tutored students individually. Since she also read all the papers, the instructor discussed his evaluations and grades with her and requested her opinions about the soundness and clarity of students' writing. He understood, and took advantage of, Kristin's peer rapport with the students. She could put those students at ease who might recoil from what they saw as his sometimes harsh and demanding criticism; she could restore a proper (positive) perspective to those re-evaluating their own intellectual worth; she could "say in another way" what he said; and she could offer her own approach to solving the problems of organization, coherence, style. During student conferences, the instructor would welcome Kristin's interruptions to ask for more clarification, or to pose a question she knew the student should have asked. Quite consciously, the instructor and the tutor blended their respective talents (while maintaining their distinct roles) in order to invigorate and intensify the writing experience of the students.

Since Freshman Studies faculty are THE faculty--are teaching in their respective disciplines and are concerned with the writing of students in those courses, their perception of the value of peer tutoring, and the role of the tutor, has affected the tutor/faculty partnership campuswide. Their positive, and often extensive, experience working with the tutors has enhanced, and continually enhances, their joint involvement in the tutoring program. In addition to their greater inclination to make or encourage referrals, faculty are more willing to contribute to the objectives and design of tutorials, to discuss a student's progress, and to include the tutor in their student conferences. Indeed, some faculty have requested section tutors for their non-Freshman Studies classes.

The tutors' experience, their work with both the students and the faculty, is an essential component of new tutor training. In addition to preparing new tutors to respond to the individual student and the writing at hand, training focuses on the tutor/faculty relationship. New tutors cannot merely accept the procedural conditions requiring their communication with the faculty and then function in all other respects as "silent" partners. Rather, they must assert themselves: they must represent to the faculty the advantages which derive from peer tutoring and from the continual exchange among the student, tutor, and instructor. The experienced tutors offer a description of those advantages and, in effect, define the role of the writing tutor at Lawrence.

Stephen H. Goldman

Assessing Success: Evaluating the Work of a Writing Center

The Writing Center at the University of Kansas has an unusual charge, one rather different from most writing centers in the United States. We are not a writing laboratory, and helping students, either undergraduate or graduate, with their papers by supplying tutors is a rather small part of our daily work. Instead, our primary task is to help faculty members throughout the University create writing assignments for their classes that will aid their students in mastering the subject matter. We, in other words, advise our colleagues about the incorporation of writing into their classes and the use of writing as a tool for learning rather than as a tool for testing. Every faculty member who works with us has volunteered, and if he or she wishes to remain anonymous, we respect that choice.

The Writing Center represents the University of Kansas's major strategy for implementing a writing across the curriculum program. Unlike other institutions, however, our program does not depend on special writing intensive courses or on a large writing laboratory. We do not use writing intensive courses because we believed they are unfair to the few faculty members who would be called upon to teach them and because we believed that such classes send the wrong message to the students. They imply that writing is limited to special circumstances in special classes. Or, in other words, writing is not necessary in the majority of classes the students take in their majors.

We did not create an extensive writing laboratory because we feared our students would use it as a first aid station for their papers, popping in when they had a final draft that needed editing. Since we have committed ourselves to a process model, we wished to guide the students at a much earlier stage of their work.

In our very first year, the 1986-87 academic year, we quickly learned that measuring our effectiveness was no simple task. While we tried various forms of questionnaires to be filled out by both faculty who used our service and their students, we never got back what we felt was a accurate description of what we did or the faculty's and students' feeling toward it. For any given faculty member, our services would include a series of meetings that helped to clarify the instructor's desires for his or her class, what he or she hoped to accomplish by assigning writing assignments, and why he or she was dissatisfied with the present level of student writing for that class. Very often, these meeting served as opportunities for us to introduce the volunteers to the concept of writing as a tool for learning, to the writing process, and to the need for thoroughly reasoned writing assignments that have specific goals for the students to achieve.

These meeting were only the first step in our process. Next came suggestions for specific writing assignments. We would describe various possibilities (eg., journals, term papers, various forms of laboratory reports, book reports, short paragraph-long writing assignments) and the instructor would choose among them. Then we would show the instructor examples of the assignments as they were designed for other classes. From these examples and the instructor's reaction to them, we designed specific assignment sheets for his or her class. These assignment sheets often took the form or ten or twelve page guides for the student to use in working on the writing exercise.

The production of the guides, however, did not end the process. Such supplementary material as models of what the instructor considered good papers, the formulation of grading criteria, and peer tutoring for students working on a specific assignment constructed by us also became significant services of the Center. We offered to help revise assignments that did not work as well as the instructor liked, to come to the instructor's class to explain the concept of writing as a tool for learning, and to help the instructor with any future courses he or she might like to develop.

How could such a process be summarized in a series of well-worded questions that would evaluate exactly what the Center's staff was able to accomplish? The work we did became so much a part of the course the instructor taught that there was no way of separating the elements out. It was impossible to comment only on the work of the Center.

And the same was true for the students. While we asked them about their impressions of the quality of the writing guides, of the usefulness of the writing assignments, and of how the assignments helped them learn the course material, their responses dealt frequently with matters that went far beyond what the Writing Center was responsible for. The assignments could only be evaluated in terms of the entire course.

As a result of these problems we tried to find alternative ways of evaluating our program, ways that might be able to assess not simply the individual functions we perform but the way each part creates a whole service for faculty and students alike. In our search we found that the Writing Center was answerable to three different groups within the University of Kansas. First, of course, we had responsibilities to the individual faculty and their students. Each person who used our services judged our work by the his or her level of usage, by whether or not following courses made use of our services, and by whether or not the instructor recommended us to colleagues.

Second, the Center reported to a University-wide committee on writing across the curriculum. This committee had only an advisory function, but because its membership represented a cross-section of the faculty and these members were highly interested in the use of writing across all areas of study, its advice is taken seriously by the staff of the Center. Because that committee is periodically informed of all the work of the Center, what its members have to say is also a good measure of how well the Center's work is going.

Finally, the Writing Center is part of the administrative division known as Academic Affairs. The work of the director and associate director must be reviewed by an associate vice-chancellor yearly. Since this person is also a member of the University Writing Across the Curriculum Committee, he is well-informed of the work of the Center as a whole. Certainly his opinion should constitute another element in the evaluation.

Using all three of these elements, we believe we have found a way of assessing all the work of the Writing Center in a reasonable and detailed manner. Equally important, we are able to apply this evaluation to our on-going work because our method of assessment occurs simultaneously with our work, as the following case studies will show.

One way to assess success of a program is to follow a paper trail. A case study of the University of Kansas Western Civilization program is a double trail--a paper and a people trail.

The Writing Center became affiliated with the Western Civilization program in 1986 when we were made part of the program's two year $120,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Each year, over 5000 undergraduate students study the great works of western civilization through this K.U. program. The 40 teachers, mostly graduate teaching assistants, have, until this year, conducted small-group discussions. This year, each instructor teaches in sections numbering 25-35 students, using a lecture-discussion format.

Because the WRiting Center was mentioned in the grant proposal, we were asked to give a series of presentations to the instructors on the use of writing as a tool for learning, As a result of our presentations to Western Civilization instructors, in 1987 Jean, a GTA with a strong background in English, approached us to help her develop a double-entry reading journal project. Together, we created a journal instruction handout that taught the paraphrase and summary, annotation, and critical evaluation strategies. More importantly, the journal gave form to a study strategy by which students could tackle the challenging texts used in Western Civilization. That year, Jean assigned the double-entry reading journal to her 100 students. Her husband, a Topeka, KS high school teacher, assigned the journal to the students in his Humanities lecture course. At that point, we knew we had two instructors satisfied with the document.

The following year, Jean worked with us to refine the handout. Almost immediately we realized we had done something right: one of the full professors attached to the program, along with numerous GTAs, requested copies of Jean's journal. In fact, there was such a demand for the document, that we turned over a master copy to Western Civilization for distribution.

Unfortunately, by relinquishing control over distribution of the handout, we lost this paper trail--an assessment error on our part. While we do not know all who are using the double-entry journal, we do know that, as of this semester, Jean has used the

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assignment with 500 students and her husband has assigned similar journals to over 150 high school students.

But back to the main trail-- a second graduate teaching assistant in the program, Nanette, perused the journal handout, liked the concepts, but did not think that the journal format fit her teaching style. We worked with her to develop a form to fit her teaching. What resulted was the Study Guide for Western Civilization. This guide incorporates peer review, minimizing grading time while maximizing student engagement of the texts. That guide, which has been revised once, has been used by over 200 students to date. In this case, besides having Nanette's very positive feedback, we know some of the student problems with this project because our peer tutor read student responses and tutored those who had difficulty working with the assignment. Thus, the information gleaned from the tutor's observations has aided us in assessing the success of this project.

This Fall, at the request of the Western Civilization program, the Writing Center provided writing-for-learning materials for their teacher-training manual. Besides Jean's and Nanette's projects, we developed, at Jean's request, an addendum to the journal, answering teacher questions about journal use, grading, and management. In addition, the teachers were given strategies for using short writings as well as a handout for students dealing with writing an essay examination.

After this semester's Writing Center presentation to the Western Civilization teachers, Pam, another GTA, collaborated with us to develop a journal assignment that combines the strengths of both Jean's and Nanette's documents, while focusing on modern applications of major Western Civilization themes. While in the office, Pam suggested another project: an annotated bibliography of books brought up in class discussion. The resulting handout, describing citation forms as well as how to annotate, has been very helpful according to Pam. She hopes, as do we, that the students will recognize the value of similar projects in their other classes.

Perhaps as important as anything we have learned, we know now, in our third year of cooperation with Western Civilization, that we have succeeded in being regarded as an on-going resource. At mid-term time, for example, a veteran instructor stopped by to ask for input on his semester-long project: All had gone well until the mid-term. What suggestions could we make to get the students back on track?

Looking back, we have learned a lot about assessing success by following the paper and people associated with Wester Civilization. By the inquiries and off-shoots the journal has spawned, we know it is successful, even though we do not have hard data confirming how many individuals used the original handout. We know we should have followed who acquired copies from the Western Civilization office two years ago, but we have discovered that even that accounting would not have yielded accurate information. For one thing, this handout has become the model for journals in other departments--English, for example. Another complication is that we have used the Western Civilization journal handout as a sample when we do presentations. There is, of course, no way we can keep track of this trail for very long. Just last week, one of our staff members learned in conversation with an acquaintance that that individual was using a modified version of the Western Civilization journal, with success, in the philosophy class she teaches. She had acquired a copy from a friend, who, by the way, was unknown to us.

We also know that we should collect student documents, comments and suggestions more diligently. Thanks to Jean, we have journal samples, and we are beginning to collect student evaluations as we have with other programs.

A question that we have not addressed with any of our clients is whether those students who perceive that they have benefitted from what we offer continue to use those strategies in other classes without teacher incentive. In other words, we need a longitudinal study of student-users. We have not begun that yet.

We have tried this year to assess external factors which inhibit student and teacher from using of our services in Western Civilization. Fears that incorporating a journal would lead to a paper-crunch were discussed in the journal use addendum included in the teacher-training manual and were addressed head-on in the instructor orientation. A program-wide paper-use restriction has caused us to collapse documents to the fewest pages possible. We hope that early planning for next year will allow documents to be included in the student text, alleviating paper-use complications.

What we have learned about assessing success from the Western Civilization program, a relationship which has slowly evolved over three years, is serving us in good stead in our recent and rapidly expanding relationship with the Communications Studies department, a recent project that in just a few months has helped us to further develop new evaluation techniques.

The Writing Center's collaboration with the Department of Communications Studies gives us one of the strongest working examples of our Center in action. Our work with members of this department began only this fall, so what we will be sharing is work in progress. It's too soon to tabulate the results -- the number of students helped or the number of faculty converted to the use of writing as a tool for learning. But our early work indicates this department definitely will be one of our success stories. If we use the measures of faculty satisfaction, rate of faculty return, and the independent movement of our materials within a department, then our work with Communications Studies was successful within weeks of our first contact.

In late August, before classes began, two of our staff members visited a training session for the department's new graduate teaching assistants. About a dozen inexperienced teachers and their supervisors listened to a two-hour presentation. We gave them the Writing Center's brief history, distributed our philosophy statement, and gave some concrete examples of how writing can be used as a tool for learning in the classroom. We then shared examples of assignments for journals, in-class writing assignments, and book reviews. We watched heads nod. People dutifully took notes. But we really grabbed their attention when we announced we could help these novice teachers create writing assignments; we could help them through the grading process; AND our peer tutors would help their students write papers that met the assignments. One woman burst out, "That's wonderful."

Later, after the meeting, we predicted we would definitely see that woman in the office. Our prediction of "one" was off. Within two weeks we saw not only that woman but six of her colleagues -- 50 percent of the GTAs at the meeting. Thirty-five sections of Personal Communications 150 are taught this semester, and these GTAs represent almost one-third of the classes. Together they teach about 250 students.

What do these numbers initially mean to the Writing Center staff? Bottom line, we are delighted that about 30 hours of collaboration with these GTAs produced writing assignments that helped 250 students focus on writing as a tool for learning and discourse. Feedback from the GTAs has supported our belief that clearly written assignments and the grading checklists help students and that our collaborative approach also helps the teachers.

Collaboration is more than a buzz word at the Writing Center, it is the philosophy that guides our working relationship with our faculty clients. The center is staffed by an associate professor of English, four English Ph.D. candidates--all composition teachers--and a professional writer with more than 10 years of reporting and publishing experience. We offer clients practical and theoretical knowledge of writing and writing mechanics. We expect our clients to contribute the expertise within their wide-ranging disciplines--and they do. We have worked with faculty from business, art and design, aero-space engineering, biology, and most recently communications studies.

Our experience with communications this semester provides a strong example of how this collaboration works. Neither of the presenters and the initial meeting have any academic training in personal communications when the first GTA, Debra, approached us about a writing assignment. She wanted an assignment that would lead her students through an understanding of conflict and its resolution. She taught us about the topic and its professional terminology, and from our writing experience, we taught her about journals. We suggested a journal structure would reenforce objective learning and also would give the student a forum for analyzing what happens during conflict.

The journal helped Debra's students identify the day-to-day conflicts they experienced, analyze the roles they played in those conflicts, and decide if and how they could change their conflict style. The journal gave the students the meat for their conflict paper..

She also gave us the EDIT structure. a format the communications department had adopted for helping students to revise papers. With her help we were able to develop an assignment that explained the EDIT structure to beginning communications students and that showed them how the information in their journals should be placed within this structure.

We also worked with Debra to devise the grading checklist. The checklist helped her identify what she would stress in her grading. Because the students received the checklist along with the assignment sheet, they knew from the start what expectations they had to meet to be successful.

Our experience with Debra, was repeated, with variations, with the six other Communications 150 GTAs. A GTA from a communications course in business writing also knocked on our door. We worked with her on assignments for letter writing and short reports and on how to grade these papers.

More and more students from these communications classes are coming for peer tutoring. The numbers are growing as the GTAs continue to stress our service and as the students get back their first papers.

We stressed earlier in this talk that our speech project still is developing and expanding. We know of GTAs who have seen their colleagues Writing Center materials and have used them independently in their own courses. We plan to refine the materials used this semester and to develop materials for other communications courses. For example, we are working with GTAs on journal materials for the public speaking courses.

The GTAs' faculty supervisor is interested in incorporating our Writing Center materials in a GTA teaching supplement that can be used in future communications classes. This independent use of our materials expands the number of students who can use our peer tutors and frees us to assist faculty from other departments in the ways we assisted communications studies.

It's obvious from the examples we've given, that the Writing Center's strongly supports fledgling teachers. By working in collaboration with the Writing Center staff, inexperienced teachers see how writing can be a tool for learning. Our questions and suggestions help them to focus and to clarify their assignments. The checklists help them to grade assignments in a less demanding and more objective fashion.

One GTA plans to use the journal approach to conflict analysis and resolution in her master's thesis. She also thinks her work with the Writing Center will improve her own writing.

Our work with Communications Studies has been warmly

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received by junior and senior faculty within the department. As the word spreads that our materials and our collaborative approach are helpful, our faculty contacts have increased. Most important our materials are receiving wide-spread use and the number of communications students who visit our peer tutors is increasing.

The case studies we have just discussed deal with instructors and classes within the University of Kansas, but the Writing Center's work does not stop there. We have a continuing commitment to work with the elementary- and secondary-school teachers of our state, and we are learning how to incorporate what we have learned about assessment into this part of our program as well.

In assessing the success of the Writing Center's outreach to public schools through one-day in-service workshops and through summer courses, the numbers derived reflect only one means of assessment, and, at that, a somewhat deceptive one. Even the numbers we can estimate with confidence cannot truly account for the ripple effect that we know is produced by even the most seemingly fleeting contact with faculty of public schools in the in-service settings or the context of our summer classes. These are actually only a touchstone for a larger network of contacts that manifests itself in a variety of ways.

Consider the two graduate level courses that the Writing Center has created and offered the last two summers. The first time it was offered for three to six hours of graduate credit, it was an intensive two-week seminar titled, "English 980: Seminar in Writing Across the Curriculum," with an enrollment of seven students, most of whom were high school teachers. At the end of the course, these teachers revealed in their course evaluations that they expected to reach a total of 450 students in the next school year. Ultimately, however, even that number turned out to be somewhat inaccurate because when the original seven came back to the University of Kansas in the fall of 1988 to participate in a presentation of their individual research projects to a group of 70 high school teachers from across the state of Kansas. Thus, what the developed in a single summer workshop is now reaching potentially thousands of high-school students throughout the state.

It is further testament to the success of the course that these teachers felt confident enough about the knowledge they gained from the course and felt sufficiently comfortable with the writing across the curriculum philosophy to want to make presentations of this sort to their peers since most of them had not done anything of the kind before. One class member was so enthused, he asked his principal to invite the Writing Center staff to participate in a district-wide in-service training day. There has also been considerable follow-up contact by mail and phone. Moreover, when a second offering of the course was made this summer, one member of the original class graciously volunteered to help. All former students are well aware of the staff of the Writing Center and they know that the Center's resources are available to them for their further investigation and study of writing across the curriculum issues and for guidance in implementing writing-as-learning programs in their schools.

The course offered during the summer of 1989, extended to three, rather than two, weeks and titled, "English 590: Studies in Writing Across the Curriculum," yielded an even greater number of potential students reached since there were nine teachers in the class, all from the Kansas City metropolitan area. These class members estimated that a total of 1,035 students would be affected by their use of writing across the curriculum concepts. One of the class members, whose innovative final project masterfully incorporated writing across the curriculum strategies into her year-long French conversation course, recently contacted us for assistance in developing her Master's degree project, which is to create a writing center at the large public high school where she presently teaches French.

The class members in the course offered this past summer provided, at our request, midterm evaluations in which they voiced issues and concerns they hoped to see addressed in the second half of the seminar; these evaluations also praised the course content to date, In the more comprehensive final evaluation, all class members acknowledged that they had already recommended the course to colleagues and they suggested the course be offered at the University of Kansas's satellite facility in the Kansas City area, the University of Kansas Regents Center, so that more students would be attracted to the program, thus serving an even larger group of teachers.

As a final measure of success, both the Chairman and Associate Chairman of the English Department strongly urged the Writing Center to submit a proposal to offer the course again next summer. We await the results of the University's decision as to the allocation of funds for this course -- perhaps our most critical assessment of success.

Besides the offerings of the summer course, whose tentacles reach far beyond the immediate classroom and into the larger arena of the public school system, our outreach to public schools within the state of Kansas extends, as we mentioned before, to in-service workshops that are offered free of charge to schools that request them. As the result of a presentation we made at a conference in Emporia, Kansas, the Writing Center staff was invited to conduct an afternoon workshop to the entire faculty of a public high school during an in-service day held before the beginning of the fall semester. Located in the small town of Ellsworth, Kansas, this high school was an important contact with the teachers of the area since many of their students opt to attend either the local community colleges or Kansas State University, which is close to Ellsworth. We were able, in other words, to work with an audience not previously available to the University of Kansas.

Finally, though the Writing Center did not make a formal

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presentation at this year's University of Kansas October Conference on Composition and Literature (as we have effectively done for the past three years on such topics as writing across the curriculum, structuring the writing of term papers and research methods, uses of journals, and, of course, the presentations of the 1988 members of our summer workshop), several members of the Writing Center staff participated in presentations that were directly informed by their work for the Center. Their topics included the use and integration of computers in writing curriculums and the scope and design of good writing assignments, especially through the use of sequenced, segmented assignments.

Our speakers are in constant demand and this demand is based on the recommendations of people who have already heard us. Indeed, so pleased have people been with our presentations that we have taken yet another task, this one, once again, within the walls of the University.

An expanded service to specific, targeted university personnel was initiated last spring in response to a direct request of the executive vice chancellor. Memo-writing at the university apparently needed some help. Within four weeks of the request, Writing Center staff presented six Memo-Writing workshops. Twelve participants for each session were selected by division heads from volunteers within the Comptroller's office.

Armed with a review of current literature, our approach was rhetorical--focusing on the subjects and purposes of these mailings and addressing issues of style such as voice and readability. We found, as Elizabeth Tebeaux explains in the February 1988 Teaching English in the Two Year College, that "the trouble with employee's writing may be freshman composition. We dispelled their belief in topic sentences as controlling organizers, and emphasized instead practical and visual organization cues such as numbered lists. We recommended turning paragraphs of prose into direct, single-sentence statements. Our workshop format included overhead transparencies of before-and-after writing samples from their particular world of work. Workshop exercises addressed manipulation of sentences, selection and arrangement of memo content, and standard forms.

We assess the success of our endeavors for this inreach and expansion of services by several measures. In summarizing the effects of our interventions, we look at the satisfaction level of the various participants within the hierarchy according to their own goals. We also confirm our positive outcomes by the kinds of follow-up contacts we have maintained and, ultimately, by judging the product--the change in quality of memos circulated from the comptroller's staff to the larger university community.

The participants themselves were a willing and attentive audience. Their own interest in writing improvement was validated by their follow-up contact with the Writing Center to apply our general suggestions to their specific mailings. Their response included requests for additional help on three major payroll mailings during the spring semester. Their feedback told us of their new sensitivity to writing and their eagerness to involve us in their process of improvement.

The supervisors were equally pleased with the service we were able to provide. The comptroller himself attended an early workshop and found the material useful. He not only relayed to us numerous positive comments from his employees, but also wrote to the executive vice chancellor in support of our efforts and willingness to provide in-house instruction.

The executive vice chancellor, whose suggestion prompted the entire series, expressed her satisfaction in the most tangible ways. Our memo-writing workshops have created new opportunities for the Writing Center and garnered increased budgetary funds for our work. Our continuing relationship with the vice chancellor's office as consultants across the university has resulted in direct increases in our supplies and equipment budget, along with the promise of additional funds if needed. And this promise comes from an executive vice chancellor who keeps her word.

The Writing Center has also recruited new business, such as involvement in a new, university-wide project on writing a handbook on financial affairs for department chairs. We will be consulting with the committee as they progress through drafts, revising and approving sections and editing for style.

As much as we can sense success from our various clients, the bottom line on whether we are accomplishing anything must be judged not only by our public relations, our spreading influence, our increasing involvement and responsibility with various audiences at the university, and our monetary rewards such as line-item budget increases. Our final analysis comes down to evaluating the writing itself. If our work has impacted effectively and positively on our clients' lives, the evidence should show in their writing. Before-and-after writing samples demonstrate that our sharing of information, models, and strategies has facilitated good revision. If the university community is faced with less jargon-riddled, confusing prose and more audience-centered, direct-message communications, then our work in serving the non-academic university staff has been successful.

Indeed, the same can be said for all of our services. Our goal is to promote writing as a tool for learning and, in the process, produce writers who are comfortable with the forms and logic of their chosen fields. That assessment must take place over years, not months, but we are already laying the groundwork for such an evaluation. It is, of course, our belief that when that project is done we will have yet another confirmation of the success of our Center.

Stephen H. Goldman
Mary Pat McQuenney
Judith Galas
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Specialists vs. Generalists: Managing the Writing Center-Learning Center Connection

Dave Healy
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One mark of professionalization is specialization. If a distinguishing characteristic of a profession is mastery of a systematic body of knowledge (Greenwood), then it is reasonable to expect that a given professional will be able to master only a portion of the total body of knowledge that lies within her profession's purview. While patients are grateful for the wide-ranging diagnostic skills of the general practitioner, most depend heavily on specialists for medical counsel and care—on radiologists, allergists, gynecologists, urologists, and the like. The individual contemplating divorce will likely want to retain an attorney who specializes in marital dissolutions, just as someone struggling with a complicated form from the IRS will seek out the services of a tax accountant.

Since their inception, writing centers have struggled to attain professional status and recognition. Stephen North's 1984 *College English* article, "The Idea of a Writing Center," chronicles the general lack of respect writing centers have received over the years and concludes that, despite some apparently hopeful signs of solidification and institutionalization, the idea of a writing center is still misunderstood and the professional autonomy writing centers deserve is rarely granted. Jeanne Simpson, on the other hand, declares in her 1985 *Writing Center Journal* article that, "The evidence indicates that we have achieved a kind of legitimacy: writing centers have become academically respectable programs" (35).

While North and Simpson may disagree about the professional identity of writing centers, they clearly share a desire for centers to be accorded full professional status. North states, for example, that "the first rule in our Writing Center is that we are professionals. . . . In return, of course, we expect equal professional courtesy" (441). Certainly this a reasonable expectation. The question is, how do we go about obtaining recognition that we are professionals? As I have indicated, one way is to convince prospective clients that we have mastered a particular body of knowledge, to carefully define and circumscribe our particular sphere of activity. This, in fact, is the posture Simpson adopts: "I oppose the idea of incorporating writing labs into larger 'learning centers' in which tutoring for several disciplines occurs" (35). To enhance professional power, emphasize your professional distinctiveness.

The issue of establishing a professional identity affects not only writing centers, but the field of composition instruction as a whole. If composition is a legitimate discipline, argue spokespersons such as Maxine Hairston, then we should break our bonds and establish our autonomy from English departments.

> I think that as rhetoricians and writing teachers we will come of age and become autonomous professionals with a discipline of our own only if we can make a psychological break with the literary critics who today dominate the profession of English studies. Until we move out from behind their shadows and no longer accept their definition of what our profession should be, we are not going to have full confidence in our own mission and our own professionalism. (273-274)

One approach, then, to gaining and maintaining professional identity is to distinguish yourself, guard your autonomy, and market your specialty. If Simpson is right that writing centers have achieved some hard-won professional legitimacy and respectability, then it seems to make sense to protect and enhance our reputation by emphasizing our autonomy. This is a writing center, we should be able to claim, not a "learning" or "skills" center.

I support any attempts to disassociate writing centers from "skills" centers. The center I direct used to have the "s" word in its name, and though it was dropped several years ago (over the strenuous objections, I might add, of many faculty), old-timers still habitually refer to my domain as "the Skills Center," an appelation that always causes me to cringe. This designation is part of what North calls the "old" writing center, the one consigned to skill and drill, remediation, "basics." In contrast to the old center's product-centered emphasis is the new writing center's student-centered approach,

> a pedagogy of direct intervention. Whereas in the "old" center instruction tends to take place after or apart from writing, and tends to focus on the correction of textual problems, in the "new" center the teaching takes place as much as possible during writing, during the activity being learned (439).

North calls a tutor in the new writing center a "holist devoted to a participant-observer methodology" (438-439).

But while the "skills" label should be shunned, the idea of being part of a "learning center" does not seem inhospitable. If one accepts North's idea of a writing center as a place where the subject is the learner, where tutors are holists, where instruction focuses on the activity rather than the written product, then it seems to me that a marriage between a writing center and learning center is, if not made in heaven, at least a union of kindred spirits.

The message of the writing-across-the-curriculum movement is clear: writing is not the exclusive domain of the composition or English department. Writing teachers should be able to expect that teachers in other disciplines will assign and talk about writing because writing is a way of learning. If this is true, might it also be true that in a place where people talk about writing it makes sense to talk about other ways of learning?

The RWC Experiment

This feeling was the cautious underpinning of my decision a year ago to retain one portion of the curriculum I inherited as director of General College's Reading & Writing Center. The RWC had been home to a number of tutorial-supported independent study courses, mostly writing related, but also including one in study skills. I decided to jettison all of them because I didn't think a writing center should be in the business of offering courses. The idea of a writing center, I believed, is not to create assignments but to work with people who already have writing projects underway and who want to talk about them. So I cancelled our course offerings.

I found, however, that I was not entirely at peace about my decision. I realized I had seen something in our old study skills course that I liked. One thing that did have to go was the name: "Effective College Study Skills" was enough to numb even the most ardent class schedule scanner. In addition, "study skills," like "skills center," connotes isolated activities, unconnected to the actual learning that ought to be going on in and out of the classroom. But the idea of a course in learning strategies still made sense to me, as did the idea of enlisting writing center tutors in the delivery of such a course.

I confess that I proceeded with little more than a vague sense that what I envisioned made sense. It has been after the fact that I have begun to marshal the theoretical support for a move that was made mostly intuitively. In this regard I have mirrored the approach of the whole peer tutoring movement, as described by Kenneth Bruffee. In the 1970s, some faculty and administrators, aware that incoming students were increasingly under-prepared for the academic demands of college and that attempts at supplemental assistance for these students were often unsuccessful, turned to a relatively new concept: peer tutoring. The approach worked. "More recently," says Bruffee, "we have begun to learn that much of this practical experience and the insights it yielded have a conceptual rationale, a theoretical dimension, that had escaped us earlier as we muddled through, trying to solve practical problems in practical ways" (4).

The practical problem we faced in General College at the University of Minnesota was that most students come to us without the learning strategies they need to succeed academically. Furthermore, the assistance available to such students is not helpful for many of them. Traditional ways of delivering "study skills" are not well suited for many of the students we see.

GC 1043

My practical solution to these problems was GC 1043, Learning Strategies: Reading & Study Improvement, a course offered through the General College Reading & Writing Center. It is designed to be taken in conjunction with another college course and to provide specific, individualized instruction in learning strategies appropriate for that course. Students in 1043 are assigned a RWC tutor to work with throughout the quarter. The course consists of nine modules, which students work on in the order they choose:

- Getting started in a college course
- Surveying what you read
- Managing your time
- Using a study system
- Preparing for tests
- Taking notes from lectures
- Taking notes on and from readings
- Improving concentration and memory
- Constructing concept maps

1043 is designed to be taken concurrently with a fairly traditional subject-matter course, one that has a textbook, lectures, and exams. It is not well suited as a companion course for math, statistics, speech, literature, music, composition, or art courses. 1043 is intended for the student who is "able but untaught." The course will be of little help to students whose lack of academic success is mostly due to lack of motivation, students who know what they should do but simply do not implement what they know. We attempt to measure what prospective 1043 students already know by interviewing them and by administering a Learning Strategies Inventory. Based on this screening process, we will either admit them to the course or else suggest that 1043 would not be the best choice for them.

Methods of Study Skills Delivery

I have come to feel that 1043 provides General College students with a superior alternative to most traditional ways of delivering study skills. Those traditional deliveries are summarized below:

1. Self-contained course. This type of course is by design inclusive and generic. It has its own curriculum and thus could be taken by someone not taking any other coursework. A nationally-known example is Becoming a Master Student. (See Ellis)

2. Supplemental Instruction. Successful students attend class and lead group meetings. SI leaders attempt to model effective student behaviors—note-taking, questioning, reading, etc. SI uses interactive learning strategies to promote involvement, comprehension, synthesis, and higher order reasoning skills. It demonstrates effective study techniques and special subject area applications. (See Blanc et al.; Wolfe)

3. Paired or adjunct course. Here a study skills course is paired with a specific content course. The study skills teacher cooperates with the content course teacher in designing her course. This approach demands some familiarity with the companion course: often the study skills teacher actually takes the companion course before designing an adjunct course. (See Dimon; Langer and Neal)

4. Study skills workshops. Typically these are put on by a Learning/Academic Skills Center and targeted to specific areas: note-taking, time management, previewing, etc. Usually they are one-time events with a walk-in audience. (See Reed)

5. Counseling or "skills therapy" approach. This approach is typically undertaken by the student services staff. An academic adviser adopts an

attitudinal/behavioral emphasis toward learning strategies and focuses on psychological factors that contribute toward or impede academic success. Skills-training is combined with counseling in an attempt to address student needs holistically. (See Schmelzer and Brozo)

6. Freshman seminar. This course provides a general orientation to college/university life. Study skills is one of several course components, including curricular requirements, registration procedures, campus resources, career planning, interpersonal skills, etc. (See Gordon and Grites; Stupka)

7. Independent study. Such courses may be either textbook-based or computerized. Some use audio or video tapes as well.

Weaknesses of Traditional Study Skills

All of the traditional methods for delivering study skills have significant limitations. Assignments generated in self-contained or independent study courses are often perceived as artificial and can too readily become ends in themselves rather than means to an end. Students need to see the immediate practicality and applicability of the study skills instruction they receive. Also, self-contained courses tend to be presumptuous in the directions they propose. A course with the flexibility to facilitate a given student's individual needs is preferable to one that either forces students into a particular mold or else presents a smorgasbord of options with the vague advice to "choose whatever works best for you."

Supplemental instruction offers student modelling of effective strategies and focused attention on specific course content. However, only students enrolled in targeted courses are served. And, like the self-contained or independent course, supplemental instruction raises the question of transferability of skills. Also, teachers or administrators wanting to call what they do "supplemental instruction" must become part of a national network and must follow fairly strict guidelines in implementing their program.

Like supplemental instruction, adjunct courses serve only students enrolled in targeted courses. Because the paired course must be modelled closely on the subject-matter course, discipline-based faculty sometimes feel threatened by adjunct courses. For their part, instructors of adjunct courses may be forced to think on their feet rather extensively if they haven't had sustained exposure to the subject matter of the companion course. And because the learning strategies introduced in a an adjunct course tend to be so closely tied to the subject matter of the companion course, transferability of skills again becomes an issue.

Workshops reinforce the misleading and unproductive notion that study skills are discrete, autonomous abilities which can be acquired quite apart from what goes on in a real classroom. In addition, workshops provide no opportunity for application, follow-up, or review.

The counseling approach is an attempt to treat students as whole persons and learning problems as related to issues of personal and psychological development. However, it demands a great deal of its practitioners, expecting counselors, who often have no specialized training in study skills, to be well versed in classroom learning strategies, or else learning center personnel to be knowledgeable about counseling techniques.

The freshman seminar is most effective when it focuses on the bureaucratic and interpersonal demands of college life. Adding learning strategies to an already overburdened agenda is likely to result in study skills getting lost in the shuffle. Also, this kind of course is often taught by counselors, who may not be well qualified to teach learning strategies.

Tutorial-based learning strategies instruction avoids many of the problems inherent in other methods of study skills delivery and creates its own distinctive strengths. Being simultaneously enrolled in a disciplinary course makes students' particular needs more apparent to themselves and to teachers and tutors than does the self-contained study skills course. Strategies can be applied and their effectiveness evaluated immediately. Like supplemental instruction and adjunct courses, a tutorial approach can focus on the demands of a particular course, but without being limited to as finite a portion of the total curriculum. A tutorial model provides the flexibility of independent study, but with the personalized approach and emotional support of the counseling or skills therapy method. Tutors serve as role models—experienced, successful students who know the tricks of the trade. Tutors have already received training in relational and interpersonal skills. They know how to deal with anxious, insecure, inexperienced learners. In short, of all the methods for delivering instruction in study skills, using tutors seems to be the most effective.

But should they be tutors from a writing center? In my case the answer was, "Why not?" General College did not have a learning center; we did have a writing center. If a tutorial-based program in learning strategies were to be implemented, we were the only place to do it. To the question, "Would students be well served by such a venture?" I felt compelled to answer affirmatively. To the question, "Will the RWC be well served?" I think I can, after a scant two quarters of experience with our new course, reply positively as well.

Advantages and Disadvantages

My tutors are more versatile (and more satisfied) by virtue of their experience with 1043. Most of the writing tutoring done in our center is with walk-ins. Tutors in 1043 have appreciated the opportunity to work with a student regularly for an entire quarter. They like getting to know their tutees, and they enjoy seeing the progress a student can make over a ten-week period.

One of the most effective assignments in 1043 has been the reaction paper, in which students are asked to reflect on the experience of trying a particular strategy, for example, attempting to live by a detailed schedule that plots out every hour of their lives for an entire week. They write several reaction papers during the course, and their tutors, who are already comfortable with and proficient at talking about writing, prove quite helpful.

Jeanne Simpson's fears about the dangers of diversification notwithstanding, some p.r. benefits accrue to a writing center that works with "study skills." Most faculty and advisers are overjoyed to learn that there is someplace they can send students who are unable to handle the demands of content-based courses. Students who learn about our center through 1043 also learn that we do more sustained work with writing and may be more likely to visit again for that purpose.

But teaching learning strategies through a writing center is not an unqualified blessing. We have less tutorial time available for writers than we used to. Also, I discovered that some of my assumptions about tutors' preparedness were unfounded. Even experienced, successful students, I discovered, may lack metacognitive strategies for much of what they do. Considerable training time had to be devoted to preparing tutors for their work in 1043 so that they would be able to talk about and explain what they do.

I have no easy answers to the generalist/specialist question. I must admit, however, that I like the idea that tutors in the Reading & Writing Center are perceived, and perceive themselves, as generalists. Specialization is the spirit of our age. If liberal arts education can temper that spirit, and if a college writing center can contribute to such a temperance, then I believe we are all—tutees, tutors, teachers, administrators—well serving and well served.

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PARTNERS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM:
THE INTEGRATION OF WAC AND WRITING CENTERS

by

Dr. Beth Impson, Director, SMSU Writing Center
Dr. Burl Self, Professor of Geosciences, SMSU
Susan Dorsey, Lucinda Hudson, & Laura Johnson, peer tutors

"Writing center" still denotes for most of us a tutoring service focused solely on helping students with their writing skills. Yet, there seems to be a move towards integration of traditional writing centers and writing-across-the-curriculum programs. The marriage, if not made in heaven, seems a natural one. Where better to locate faculty resources for writing but in the same center where students of those instructors can receive individual help? After a brief description of The Writing Center at Southwest Missouri State University, we will look at the advantages of the integrated program for the instructors, the students, the tutors, and the director of the WAC program.

The SMSU Center, begun in 1988-89, owes its philosophy and much of its set-up to The Writing Center at the University of Kansas, where I worked as a graduate assistant. Although the SMSU Center has a campus-wide tutoring program (unlike KU), it is primarily a faculty resource center. We help faculty members in a variety of ways: through campus-wide workshops on topics such as how to use short writing assignments and journals and how to evaluate writing in the content areas; individual consultations with faculty members about using writing in their specific courses; creating handouts for instructors to use to help their students complete writing assignments successfully; helping faculty members with their own writing. The peer tutoring program we have is complementary to these faculty services; our tutors, while available to help students in any classes, are especially trained to work with the faculty members who consult with us because of our familiarity with their assignments.

Individual consultations are the heart of SMSU's writing-across-the-curriculum program. In Fall 1988, one of the first instructors who requested such a consultation with the Writing Center was Dr. Burl Self, professor of geosciences. Convinced of the need for his students to write, and of the value of the research paper for his freshman-level course in world geography, Dr. Self wanted suggestions about helping his students more successfully complete such an assignment, especially since, with a total of more than 200 students, it was impossible for him to give sufficient individual help to all students who needed it.

Dr. Self had already determined that his students needed to write more than one draft of a paper to do it well, and that he needed to require at least one early assignment (a research plan or outline) to make sure papers were begun early in the semester. Having students turn drafts in with a cassette tape and taping his comments saved considerable time in evaluation. Suggested reference works were given to the students along with a sample outline. Yet, students still seemed to need more guidance, especially in areas of data organization and report structure.

Dr. Self and I decided on a guide to take the students step-by-step through the assignment. (That guide is appended to this article.) The guide outlined the assignment, its format, the process which would be most helpful to follow to complete it, and what was to be contained in each section of the completed paper. The tutors at The Writing Center were also given copies of this guide and asked to familiarize themselves with it and ask questions about it before Dr. Self's students began coming in. As a result of this service, Dr. Self draws several conclusions about the integration of WAC and tutoring services.

Benefits to Instructors: Dr. Self

I require a research paper in my freshman level geography class because I believe that practice in writing is absolutely necessary if we wish students to be competent writers when they leave the university. As well, geographic ideas and concepts are reinforced through library research. The research assignment also helps students to better understand such geographic issues as globalization of the world economy, geostrategic issues of superpower involvement in third world political movements, and location as well as global flow of natural resources from undeveloped to developed economic centers.

The need for excellence in student writing assignments is an important instructional goal and must not be neglected. To accomplish that goal, writing centers can be valuable adjuncts to teacher review of assignments, especially for large classes. Because writing in high school was not always plentiful, peer tutors can help to teach the basic components of writing. Further, they help students determine personal interests in topic selection which will help them to design and write better papers.

I believe that no university student truly wants to produce poor work. Often, students are simply untrained (or undisciplined) in the process of writing. Consequently, instructors must integrate ways to use support services into the instructional process. I take my students on a library tour which is designed to emphasize the resources they will need for their geography project. Beth or one of her staff members comes in to discuss the Writing Center with my students when I hand out the research paper assignment, so that the students have a name and face to associate with The Center, and I suggest Writing Center conferences to specific students who seem particularly in need of help. This approach significantly improves student self-esteem and leads to better end products.

Instructors must also take responsibility for urging students to follow a process of writing that will help them to complete assignments successfully. I do this by requiring students to turn in typed research outlines as well as two drafts of the research paper before accepting the final copy at the semester's end. Though review of the outlines and drafts is time-consuming, it is vital to the students' success. Many students in this 100-level class have never written a research paper and may be taking their first college English course concurrently with geography. The process of instructor evaluation leads to increased refinement and writing quality. Requiring students to turn in a cassette tape with their drafts and taping my comments to them helps cut down on time spent responding, without sacrificing the quality of my evaluation.

In my experience clear and highly structured directions are always required in order for students to understand what I expect of their writing products. A course policy statement outlines a task completion schedule as well as example sources for completing the research project; I even go so far as to describe in writing the location in the library of recommended sources. The Writing Center guide developed by Beth and myself gives detailed instructions on both the process and the product expected of students. An evaluation criteria sheet lets students know what is expected of them before they even begin the project, as well as giving me a form on which to show what areas are strong and weak in the final draft. And all research papers from the previous semester are on closed reserve in the library for student inspection.

Benefits to Students

The benefits to students of the kind of integration of tutoring and WAC services described by Dr. Self are numerous. In the students' evaluations the first semester they used the Writing Center guide, the classes divided -- one class seemed to have no idea that a guide even existed and the other made extensive use of both the guide and the tutoring service. The grades on the papers in the two classes reflected student motivation accurately: those who used the guide and the tutoring service did much better than those who relied on the oral instructions and their own (unfortunately limited, in most cases) abilities to write such a paper.

Students who have a comprehensive guide to their writing project usually come into a tutoring session prepared to ask specific questions about their assignment and their particular paper. Conferences can get off to a quick start, so the students get the full benefit of their time. Those who come in and seem to be unaware of the guide or its purpose can be quickly directed to it by the tutor, and it then provides a means of focusing the conference.

I believe our tutors are excellent at instilling confidence in most of the writers who come into The Center. It is notably easier to do so with students whose teachers have made use of WAC resources, because those teachers have promoted The Center through personal experience with its staff. The students come in knowing the tutors are able to help them in very specific ways, and thus are sometimes more open to the suggestions offered.

When tutors know the assignment, they can easily ask directed questions of the students. The students are thus forced to think carefully about the instruction and information they have received in class as it relates to the assignment. They can be constantly referred to the guide: "Is that what this says?"; "Do you know what this means?"; "Have you done this?" Students who articulate the assignment for themselves understand their task far better than if it is interpreted for them by someone else.

The guide also gives students and tutors a means of deciding what questions need to be referred back to the instructor, rather than our attempting to deal with them in the conference. Tutors know the assignment fairly well, but not necessarily anything about the class itself and the kind of information students are receiving in class. Thus, any question the student has which the guide doesn't seem to answer is automatically referred to the teacher.

Benefits to Tutors: Susan Dorsey & Lucinda Hudson

Because we work with walk-in students as well as those enrolled in WAC classes, we are more than aware of the advantages that the WAC teachers' guides give to us and to the students.

Often limited by time constraints, the tutoring sessions need to progress quickly in order to cover the primary writing concerns of the student. If we tutors have to spend the first fifteen minutes of the hour trying to find the context for a student's paper, we may end up doing too much advising instead of allowing the student to tell us what the paper's strengths and weaknesses are.

With the guides already available to the Writing Center staff, the individual tutoring can begin as soon as the student comes in. We waste no time searching for or reading assignment sheets, calling the teacher to define unclear assignments, or spinning our wheels in a dead end session. We also don't have to worry about misguiding students since we have talked to Beth or to the teacher beforehand about any part of the guide we found confusing. We also know from the sample papers frequently provided what the teacher considers a fair, good, or excellent piece of writing.

Of course, reading others' writing has helped us to better recognize similar problems in our own writing. We can't very well give the same suggestions to people over and over and not follow this advice ourselves when having trouble. And after every semester tutoring we feel much more confident about our own writing.

Our various majors haven't exposed us to a great many different areas of study, but serving students in a variety of departments has. Through their papers we've learned about such things as 18th century Italian furniture, some methods of critiquing a work of art, how to write a business report, and what the long-term effects of the Alaskan oil spill are, and we found all of it fascinating. ~~And~~ Each of these specific subjects needs the same basic elements in writing. Clarity and organization are essential no matter what the topic, and writers must keep the audience in mind although every paper's aim may be different.

Finally, working in the Writing Center with the WAC program, we have gained greater confidence in our ability to help others. Because we have successfully tutored people from many disciplines and backgrounds, we know that certain universals exist in writing. Knowing them, all we have to do is trust our own perception in recognizing them and our competence in putting that perception to use.

Benefits to the WAC Director

In working with instructors in disciplines other than English, I find that one of their concerns is the amount of time it takes to give individual help to students with writing problems. Because the tutoring services are a part of my program, I can easily assure them of our ability to address concerns of writing within the context of their own disciplines and courses. They are more comfortable when they know that my tutors understand their concerns, and that we will not hesitate to call if questions come up, rather than risk misleading a student.

Because I spend much of my time in The Center and thus observe conferences and talk with the tutors regularly, I am quickly aware of how assignments are working from the students' point of view. I can quickly find weaknesses in the guides we use when I consider the questions that students are asking of the tutors and they, in turn, refer to me. We have, for example, been guilty of leaving out vital information about an instructor's preferences in documentation style or creating a section in a guide that is confusing to the students.

I am also able to be a "mediator" between both the tutors and students and the instructors I work with. Often, students come in upset with an instructor, when the problem really is that the student hasn't yet understood the rationale of an assignment or approach. If I have consulted with the instructor and helped to articulate the assignment, I can often help the students to understand it as well. And occasionally the tutors are mystified by or concerned about an assignment and are helped in their conferencing by a clear explanation of its rationale. Then they tend to feel that the instructor is human and approachable and will even ask questions of him or her directly, because they have already observed a relationship of professional respect between the instructor and me.

The personal benefits I receive from the integration of WAC and the writing center are the greatest, however. As much as I enjoy working with other faculty, it isn't quite the same as the excitement of constant interaction with students, especially those whom I do not have to "grade" for class performance. Over the past several years of working with peer tutors I have watched them grow and learn in ways sometimes surprising to all of us. They have made decisions to become teachers, they have gained confidence in their tutoring skills, they have become better writers themselves. These tutors don't just tutor students (and each other); they tutor me at the same time --in the art and act of writing, in compassion, in the excitement of making a difference in people's lives.

GRY 100 World Regional Geography

Semester Research Requirement Writing Guide

THE SMSU WRITING CENTER

Dr. Beth Impson ... Pummill 302 836-6398
Dr. Burl Self ... Temple 112 836-4849

Guide for Research Paper for Geography 100

One of the requirements for this course is a ten-page research paper. This guide has been prepared by your instructor and the Writing Center staff to help you successfully complete this requirement and maximize your learning from it.

WHY WRITE IN A GEOGRAPHY CLASS?

Writing about any subject helps the writer to understand that subject more fully. By writing a research report on a particular country, you will not only learn more about that country, but also about the importance of geographical issues in general, as they relate to the world situation and to your own life. For example, how does location of mineral resources affect our economy (and perhaps your career)? What is the relationship between geography and religion, geography and foreign policy? You will also begin to learn how to do research on geographical issues and how such research contributes to understanding the global relationships between the U.S. and third world countries.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Your research report will become part of a resource file to be place on reserve for students taking geography courses in the future. Thus, you will be addressing an audience much like yourself -- students with an interest in and perhaps basic knowledge of geography, but not much specific knowledge about particular areas of the world. Because this is an open resource file, you will want to use a formal tone. Because your audience consists of many people with only a basic knowledge of the subject area, you will need to be clear and may need to define any specialized terms they may not know (ones which pertain to the particular country, for example -- not necessarily general terms they would learn in the course).

FORMAT

Your research paper must be typed, double-spaced (including drafts), and contain the following elements:

I. Title Page
II. Report Body
III. References (required for final copy only)

Submit your report --- and each draft of it -- in an envelope with:

your name
address
phone number
GRY 100 section number
blank cassette tape

Your final copy must include 2 copies of the report -- one to be returned to you and one for your instructor to keep on file.

CHOOSING YOUR TOPIC

You will be assigned a country within one of the world regions to be studied in the course. It will be your responsibility to do sufficient research for a statistical and narrative profile and an analysis based on this research. You will also be responsible to choose the relevant information from your research and focus your paper so that it can present useful conclusions within the page limit.

Your instructor will suggest many specific topics you might write on about your assigned country. He is available to discuss these topics with you and help you choose, as are the tutors in the Writing Center (see end of guide for information on tutoring services).

STAGES OF YOUR PAPER

You have been asked to turn in an outline and 2 rough drafts of your paper to be evaluated before you turn in the final copy. The more seriously you take this process or writing and revising, the better your final paper will be and the more you will learn from it. The following suggestions should help you to formulate these assignments and learn from the evaluations you receive.

Outline

Though a formal outline is not the only way to begin writing, it can be a valuable tool in organizing the information you will gather as you research. In fact, beginning with a simple outline of only the major ideas to be addressed in your report can actually help you to focus your research and avoid wasting time on areas of no relevance to your paper. Then, as you gather information, add the supporting sections to your outline.

The sample outline appended to this guide shows the format you are expected to follow for your outline. Be sure that you understand the principles of formal outlining -- refer to a standard handbook and ask your instructor or a Writing Center tutor for help if you have difficulty with this. Sections which need to be included in your paper are discussed in more detail below (see "Organizing Your Paper").

Rough Drafts

Your first rough draft should be as complete and thorough as you can make it,

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though you may decide to wait to create your graphics and bibliography. Your instructor will give you a taped evaluation of this draft, focusing largely on matters of organization, development, accuracy, etc. If it would be helpful to you, he will require you to turn in a second draft for evaluation as well. Your second draft should reflect careful attention to your instructor's comments as well as your own thoughtful consideration of the paper. Your second draft should also indicate care in editing -- proofreading for spelling, punctuation, and grammar problems. Your instructor will also evaluate this draft, suggesting any further changes which might improve your paper. Again, in preparing your final copy, carefully consider his remarks and make any necessary changes.

At any point in this process, you should feel free to consult with your instructor and/or the tutors at the Writing Center for help in accomplishing your goals.

ORGANIZING YOUR PAPER

Your paper must consist of an introduction, body, and conclusion, each of which should contain certain kinds of information.

Introduction

Your introduction will consist of your narrative and statistical profile of the assigned country. (The *statistical* profile is a part of your *narrative* profile --- see sampled outline.) This section functions to give your reader sufficient background information to understand the rest of your report.

The narrative profile of the country must include the elements which you see as part of the sample outline:

Location: describe the country's location in relation to other countries and well-known regional landmarks.
Historical Summary: when did it become a country? How? What are the highlights of its history?
Climate: what is it generally like? what are the extremes it reaches?
Physical Geographical Characteristics: mountains, deserts, plains, forests, bodies of water, etc. Be specific.
Economy: what are its main sources of revenue? agriculture, industry, imports, exports, etc. Your statistical profile belongs here: see below for an extended discussion of what belongs in it.
Ethnicity: describe the people -- race(s), religion(s), language(s), origin(s), cultural background, etc.

If you would like to see an example of a professionally written narrative profile, you can look some up in *The Statesman's Yearbook* (in the reference section of the library). This section of your report should be in narrative form, not a mere listing of discrete items. Headings can be useful to indicate each section of your profile.

The Statistical Profile: This section must include the following components:
Total Land Area
People per Square Mile
Net Population Growth
Current Population Estimate
Manufacturing as Percent of GNP
Percent Imports from U.S.
Currency
Exchange Rate

You may add any other statistical information you find as well.

Body

The body of your paper will develop the main idea of your report -- the point you wish to make about the country you are discussing. You will need to decide what aspect of the country you wish to focus on, and give details which clearly show that aspect. For example, if you are interested in mineral resources, you may wish to discuss the significance of the mineral resources of your country in relation to the world political situation in general and then focus on how relations with the U.S. are affected by those resources.

Whatever topic you choose, formulate one main idea which will guide your writing and guide your readers through your analysis. "Religion in (country)" isn't a sufficiently focused topic; on the other hand, "The religious beliefs in (country) affect its relationship with other Middle Eastern countries and the U.S. by (name how)" states a specific assertion which you can then develop with the information you have found in your research. Such a specific assertion will also help you to decide what information is relevant to your report and organize it more easily.

Conclusion

The conclusion of your paper will tie together the information you have given throughout your report, telling your readers the significance of what they have just read and the conclusions you have drawn about the topic. You may also wish to make recommendations of some specific action(s) to be taken based on your research and conclusions. Do not merely summarize the rest of your report; make it clear why the information and analysis you have given are important.

REFERENCES

List all works you use in carrying out your research and writing your report. You may choose whatever documentation style you wish, but your documentation must be thorough, accurate, and consistent. We recommend MLA or APA style, both of which are available at the reference desk of the library. The Writing Center tutors will be glad to help you with questions you may have about documentation.

TUTORING SERVICES

The Writing Center, located in Pummill 302, has a staff of trained tutors who will have copies of this guide and will be glad to help you as you write your reports. Please come and visit with them at any stage of your work -- if you are having trouble finding a topic, deciding on a main idea, organizing your information, documenting your sources, or anything else. While the tutors will of course not proofread for you, they will be glad to help you improve your editing skills, too.

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Cindy Johanek
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St. Cloud, Minnesota

Learning Styles: Issues, Questions, and the Roles of the Writing Center Tutor

At writing center conferences like this one, individual learning styles are frequently discussed. We continually work toward discovering more productive approaches for individualizing the teaching of writing and promoting writing across the disciplines. In many cases, this means that writing is treated as a mode of learning, and writing centers are places in which the individualization of writing-to-learn can occur; therefore, it stands to reason that as writing center tutors, we have access to a rich understanding of writers as individual learners, writing as endless and individual modes of learning, and learning as an infinitely varied phenomenon, unique to each individual.

Years of observation of this individuality has prompted the exploration for and development of assessment tools for the description and definition of individual learning styles. A variety of learning style assessments exist, indicating the immeasurable purposes, means, and focal points of learning style researchers (see Appendix A). To choose only one tool for assessing what we would believe to be a "learning style," however, creates the danger of relying on only that tool and its assumptions. For example, modality strengths, hemispheric differences, personality types, behaviors, or cognitive processes are often seen as complete assessments. In fact, these provide only a limited vision into learning and, alone, are only parts of what could constitute a style of learning. As useful as these tools may seem, using only one tool for investigating these approaches narrows our perception of learning styles and limits our learning experiences. The Write Place at St. Cloud State University believes that, just as one tool for the assessment of learning styles is not enough, neither is one method of tutoring.

Because learning styles vary so greatly from one person to the next, and because writing provides an open playground on which individuals can learn, tutors have the opportunity and, in fact, the responsibility to be open to the endless approaches we can use when we learn. In light of these opportunities and because we feel this responsibility, it is not uncommon for us to seek out what we feel is an accurate tool that will help us learn more about the writers who use our centers. If a narrowed perception of learning styles and a limited learning experience occur when we use only one assessment tool, it would follow, then, that the same would happen if, as tutors, we use only one method when tutoring. For example, if I use only one method as a learner when I approach new learning experiences, I deprive myself of the benefits of other methods and, in turn, other experiences. If I believe that only one method works--mine--then I believe yours will work only if it is the same as mine. If I am your tutor, and I believe in my method (the only one I know), I will expect you to not only understand my method, but also to use it and to use it well, forcing on you not your own method, but mine. This deprives you of the benefits of other methods, other experiences, and other perceptions.

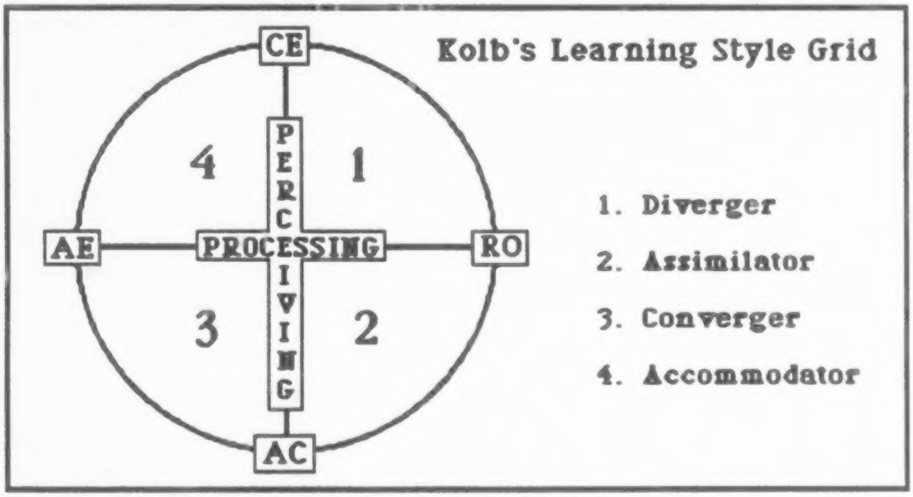
Therefore, danger exists when we limit our perceptions of learning and tutoring styles. But it is important to begin our investigation somewhere--just like it is important to begin tutoring in a way that is, at first, comfortable. Many writing centers have chosen to rely on instruments that define personality types, for example, in beginning their investigation. While studying personality types can be, of course, valuable in gaining a better understanding of individual learners, it is not complete.

Our center is no exception to this need for investigation. What follows is a brief summary of an assessment tool we have been investigating and how that tool has again reminded us that no one tool provides the clearest look into learning.

The learning style inventory (LSI) we have chosen to investigate in The Write Place was developed in the early 1970s by a managerial expert, David A. Kolb. Kolb believed that learning is the result of two activities: perceiving and processing. The unique ways in which we perceive and process information make us individual learners. Kolb asserts that the ways in which we perceive and process information can be measured by two extremes each:

Perceiving:
Concrete Experience (CE): hands-on, personal experience with objects, people, or places.
Abstract Conceptualization (AC): perceiving through informational modes, reading, or viewing
Processing:
Active Experimentation (AE): trial and error, testing, revising, doing rather than watching
Reflective Observation (RO): meditating, incubating, watching rather than doing.

Using these "fundamentals" of learning, Kolb set up a Learning Style Type Indicator and a Learning Style Profile that plot points on the two grids (see Appendix B), basing these points on scores achieved through an "inventory" in which nine sets of four words are ranked on a scale of one through four: 4 = most like me; 1 = least like me (see Appendix C for word sets). The quadrants of the grids label learning style types and assess learning strengths:



Bernice McCarthy synthesized Kolb's work and that of others to define the four types of learners Kolb's grid indicates. (See Appendix D for characteristics of each learner listed above.) Although these four labels have the potential of defeating the purpose of studying individuals, dividing learners into four types according to Kolb's perceiving/processing model provides a foundation that allows us to begin discussing learners as individuals. Those who take the learning style inventory can "plot" anywhere on the grid within any learning style type, thus maintaining individuality.

Tutors in our center have begun to investigate their own learning styles using Kolb's LSI and observing colleagues. Many staff meetings have been devoted to discussing individual differences among writers who use the center and how tutors can facilitate the learning of each writer we meet. Interaction among tutors (all having unique learning styles) provides a foundation for the creation of materials, methods, and workshops designed with all individuals in mind. Using what we know about ourselves and other writers has helped make our center more effective in our goal of meeting the needs of all students.

To make an attempt to tell anyone else how to use the Kolb LSI or any other type of learning style assessment tool would be futile. We have found, however, that encouraging tutors to gain a better understanding of themselves is a valuable key to a better understanding of others.

In an attempt to gain a better understanding of learning styles and to "test" Kolb's assessment, I gave the Kolb LSI to other tutors in our center at random intervals over the 1988/89 school year, allowing them to see their "results" only at the end of the year. Although this experiment lacked a true scientific design, it resulted in several valuable observations and raised even more questions:

- Tutors' test results were rarely the same. Some tutors who initially tested as Divergers, for example, shifted to Accommodators or Assimilators or both. Only three tutors out of fifteen remained in the same quadrant all year.
- Of the three tutors who remained stationary on the grid throughout the year, two were graduate students taking courses only in English and specializing in areas that fascinate them.

- **Those tutors who consistently tested on the left side of the grid (Active Experimentation) described themselves as writers who go through many drafts. As one Converger stated, "When I feel a paper coming on, my fingers start moving, and I need a computer--now!"**
- **Those tutors who consistently tested on the right side (Reflective Observation) often described themselves as procrastinating or writing all night before a paper is due. They also described themselves as needing pressure (i.e. an approaching deadline) before they can begin a paper.**
- **Tutors varied greatly in how they ranked the nine sets of words each time they took the test, thus resulting in varying plots on the grid. The biggest factor in how tutors rated these words seemed to be what was of immediate concern to them. One tutor stated, "Sometimes I think about my job when I take this test; other times, I think about one class or another class or my roommates."**
- **When the tutors were shown their results, most of them could identify which learning style type was best suited for them or could justify why some variation occurred. Some tutors, however, disagreed with their results.**

The variety of learning styles we have seen just among one small sample of tutors begins to indicate the infinite number of styles that walk into our center. Kolb's LSI still doesn't answer the questions surrounding other issues, such as personality types or modality strengths in individual learners. And, if used as the only learning style assessment tool, it is potentially dangerous in that it could result in hasty assumptions that could narrow our perceptions of individual learning styles. For example, suppose you complete the inventory today and test as an Assimilator (using McCarthy's description), finding the inventory to be accurate. You then might say, "I am an Assimilator." But what if, four months later, you test as a Diverger?

The Write Place tutors varied tremendously in their inventory results, some tutors testing as three learning style types throughout the year. But to assert that varying results indicate that Kolb's LSI is inaccurate would be premature. But is it inaccurate just because it yields inconsistent results for the same learner? Or could it indicate just how adaptable we are as learners and, therefore, be an accurate tool? Could we apply the shifting test results to the idea that learning styles also shift?

What variables are at play here? The following are factors that could possibly influence inconsistent results on the Kolb LSI or any other assessment tool:

- interaction with other learners, compatible or incompatible
- working in isolation
- health
- vacation/time off
- new tasks
- new context
- moods
- decreased/increased responsibility

Looking at the experiences of an average college student, for example, would we dare argue that students employ the same affective and cognitive functions when writing a freshman composition essay as when constructing an equilateral triangle? dissecting a worm? listening to Beethoven? Are these students, in these varying situations, working under identical constraints? with the same teacher? the same level of interest? the same experience base? the same goal? The answer to these questions would most likely be "no."

If it is true, then, that in learning new tasks in new situations, our approaches to those situations change, then it would also be true that the results of any learning style assessment tool would also change. Could we then speculate that it is not only the results that change, but that the learning style itself that is also altered?

And if it's true that learning styles change, how do we assess a "true" learning style? or does a learner have just one? As learners in most everything we do, we come in contact with a variety of personalities; meet a variety of challenges; have access to many skills, resources, methods, and experiences; and hold the capability to create a countless combination of these and other factors that influence what we call learning.

With all of this variability, then, what's a tutor to do? What is our job, and what is the role of the writing center? And how do we fulfill that role effectively?

We can see some writing centers trying to "match" students with linguistically or cognitively compatible tutors. We see others trying desperately to make the "How to Organize an Essay in Relation to a House" handout work for everyone in an effort to "meet and defeat" the learning style issue. Rather than force-feeding one tutoring method or limiting a writer's opportunities to work with a variety of other writers, we should encourage tutors to "see and stretch" individual learning styles; in other words, we should facilitate openness and respect in understanding our own learning styles, those of others, and the results of interaction when two or more learners meet. We could encourage tutors to remember, for starters, some of the following points:

- Just because you enjoy having someone rattle off a vocabulary list when you are searching for a word, it doesn't mean your student will.
- Just because you find it effective to "map out" your paper in the early stages of writing, it doesn't mean your student will.
- Just because you've done your best writing the night before the paper was due, it doesn't mean your student has.
- Just because you need a lot feedback while you are drafting a paper, it doesn't mean your students do--maybe they're required to see you.

Making assumptions about writing and about writers is one of the most effective ways to encourage a writer to shut down. Instead of statements like, "What works for me is . . ." why not try, "What would work for you?" Understanding ourselves as writers and as learners is a key to understanding other learners and ourselves as tutors. Although one assessment tool--or, in fact, one assessment--could not possibly offer complete insight into countless individual differences, it aids in beginning the discussions and the investigations that could lead to a more complete understanding and application.

More importantly, any assessment tool provides a springboard for questions: what are learning styles? where do they come from? how do they work? what do they mean? Are learning styles static? dynamic? Are they culturally bound? universal? Are they founded in physiological differences? emotional? cognitive? environmental? How do learning styles interact? Why doesn't everybody get along?

When it comes to writing, do learning styles have a direct impact on writing styles? or do they simply indicate how a writer goes about handling a writing situation? How does a tutor help writers meet and succeed in a variety of situations? How do we know what to do?

Or do we?

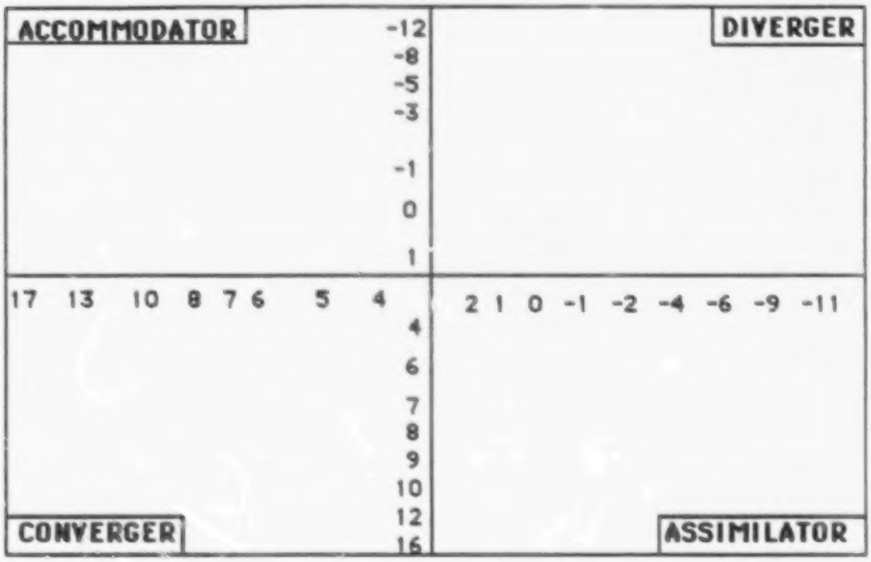
APPENDIX A

Ways to Assess Style

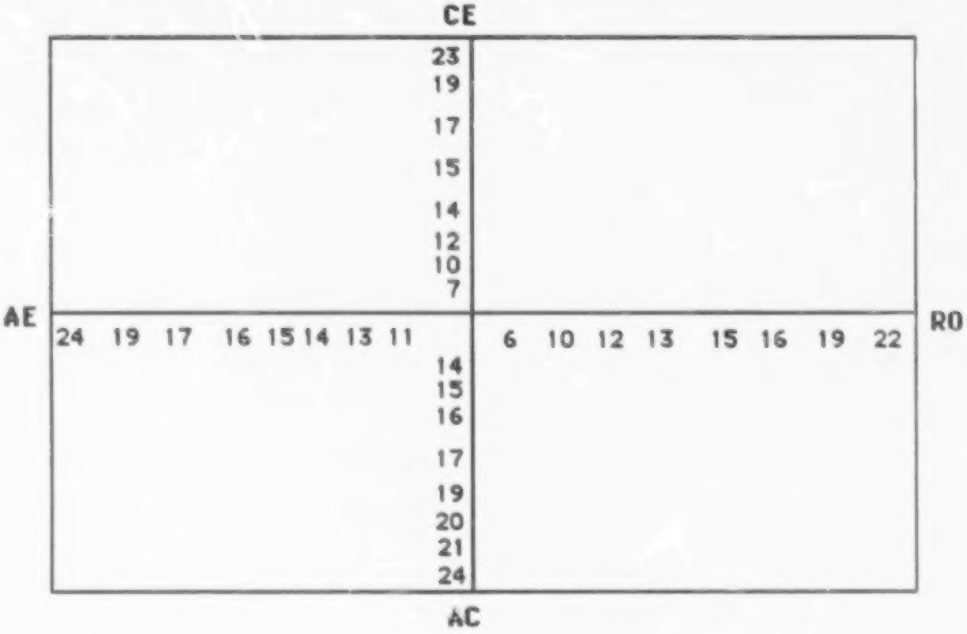
INVENTORIES	RESEARCHERS
Direct self-report:	
-- Learning Styles Inventory (LSI)	Dunn, Dunn, and Price
-- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)	Myers-Briggs
-- Communicating Styles Survey	Mok
Indirect self-report:	
-- Gregorc Style Delineator	Gregorc
-- Learning Style Inventory	Kolb, used by McCarthy
TESTS	
-- Embedded Figures Test	Witkin
-- Swassing-Barbe Modality Index	Barbe and Swassing
INTERVIEW	
-- Open-ended conversation	
-- With "Inventory" questions	
-- Writing one's own profile as a learner	
OBSERVATION	
-- Checklists	Lawrence, Barbe, and Swassing
-- Anecdotal records	
-- Listening/Watching	
ANALYSIS OF PRODUCTS OF LEARNING	
-- Achievements	
-- Errors (e.g., reading miscue-analysis)	

SOURCE: Guild, Pat Burke, and Garger, Stephen. Marching to Different Drummers. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1985, page 82.

APPENDIX B


ACCOMMODATOR
DIVERGER
CONVERGER
ASSIMILATOR
-12
-8
-5
-3
-1
0
1
17 13 10 8 7 6 5 4
2 1 0 -1 -2 -4 -6 -9 -11
4
6
7
8
9
10
12
16

Learning Style Type Indicator


CE
23
19
17
15
14
12
10
7
AE
24 19 17 16 15 14 13 11
6 10 12 13 15 16 19 22
RO
14
15
16
17
19
20
21
24
AC

Learning Style Profile

Adapted from Kolb's Learning Style Inventory
Copyright 1976, David A. Kolb
McBer and Company, Boston

APPENDIX C

DEFINITIONS TO ACCOMPANY KOLB'S LSI

1. **INVOLVED:** to be a participant of; to be drawn into
   TENTATIVE: hesitant
   DISCRIMINATING: recognizing or making distinction, perceptive
   PRACTICAL: down-to-earth; sensible

2. **RECEPTIVE:** ready to receive or listen
   IMPARTIAL: unbiased; non-prejudiced
   ANALYTICAL: can separate a whole into parts for individual study
   RELEVANT: can relate to the matter at hand

3. **FEELING:** emotional and intuitive awareness
   WATCHING: looks or observes attentively
   THINKING: formulates in the mind
   DOING: performs, accomplishes, carries out the task

4. **ACCEPTING:** receives willingly
   AWARE: being mindful or conscious
   EVALUATIVE: to determine the value of; to examine carefully
   RISK-TAKER: willing to take the chance of injury or loss

5. **INTUITIVE:** knowing without the use of rational processes
   QUESTIONING: desiring answers
   LOGICAL: uses valid reasoning
   PRODUCTIVE: to bring about; to create

6. **CONCRETE:** relates to actual specific thing or instance
   OBSERVING: notices; perceives
   ABSTRACT: expressed without reference to specific instance
   ACTIVE: participating

7. **PRESENT-ORIENTED:** operating in the here and now
   REFLECTING: to think seriously, meditate
   FUTURE-ORIENTED: operating with future goals in mind
   PRAGMATIC: concerned with practice rather than theory; practical

8. **EXPERIENCE:** to do, see or take part in something
   OBSERVATION: paying special attention to; notice
   CONCEPTUALIZATION: to form understandings from particular instances
   EXPERIMENTATION: to learn about something not yet known

9. **INTENSE:** great concentration, extreme in degree or strength
   RESERVED: kept aside or held back
   RATIONAL: having or exercising the power to reason
   RESPONSIBLE: answering for one's actions; reliable in duties

APPENDIX D
LEARNING STYLES

The following is Bernice McCarthy's synthesis of David Kolb's Experiential Learning Model and other learning style researchers into four major learning style preferences; composite descriptions follow:

DIVERGER

-- See meaning
-- Need to be involved personally
-- Learn by listening and sharing ideas
-- Absorb reality
-- Perceive information concretely and process it reflectively
-- Are interested in people and culture; are divergent thinkers who believe in their own experience, excel in viewing concrete situations from many perspectives, and modelthemselves on those they respect
-- Function through social interaction

STRENGTH: Innovation and imagination; they are idea people
GOALS: Self-involvement in important issues, bringing unity to diversity
QUESTION: Why?
CAREERS: Counseling, personnel, humanities, organizational development
PRIMARY CONCERN: Personal meaning
LEARNING METHOD: Discussion and interaction

ASSIMILATOR

--. Seek facts
-- Need to know what the experts think
-- Learn by thinking through ideas; they form reality
-- Perceive information abstractly and process it reflectively
-- Are less interested in people than ideas and concepts; they critique information and are data collectors; thorough and industrious, they reexamine facts in situations that perplex them
-- Enjoy traditional classrooms; schools are designed for these learners
-- Function by adapting to experts

STRENGTH: Creating concepts and models
GOALS: Self-satisfaction and intellectual recognition
QUESTION: What?
CAREERS: Basic sciences, math, research, planning departments
PRIMARY CONCERN: Information
LEARNING METHOD: Informational

CONVERGER

-- Seek usability
-- Need to know how things work
-- Learn by testing theories in ways that seem sensible; they edit reality
-- Perceive information abstractly and process it actively
-- Use factual data to build designed concepts, need hands-on experiences, enjoy solving problems, resent being given answers, restrict judgment to concrete things and have limited tolerance for "fuzz" ideas; they need to know how things they are asked to do will help in real life
-- Function through inferences drawn from sensory experience

STRENGTH: Practical application of ideas
GOAL: To bring their view of the present into line with future security
QUESTION: How does it work?
CAREERS: Engineering, physical sciences, nursing, hands-on technology
PRIMARY CONCERN: Need to try things for themselves
LEARNING METHOD: Coaching

ACCOMMODATOR

-- Seek hidden possibilities
-- Need to know what can be done with things
-- Learn by trial and error, self-discovery; they enrich reality
-- Perceive information concretely and process it actively
-- Adaptable to change and relish it; like variety and excel in situations calling for flexibility
-- Tend to take risks, at ease with people but sometimes seen as pushy
-- Often reach accurate conclusions in the absence of logical justification
-- Function by acting and testing experience

STRENGTH: Action, carrying out plans
GOALS: To make things happen, to bring action to concepts
QUESTION: If? (What can this become?)
CAREERS: Marketing, sales, action-oriented managerial jobs, teaching
PRIMARY CONCERN: Need to adapt learning to their own life situations to make more of what they learn
LEARNING METHOD: Self-discovery

Dabbling with a Database: Is the Pain Worth The Profit?

by Lyn Brodersen, Karen Kassebaum, Dianne Pregler, and Robert Marrs, Writing Center, Coe College

One issue repeatedly confronting a Writing Center staff is deciding what in-house records to preserve and how to maintain them. On one side is the inevitable pressure to report virtually everything that happens. Writing Center people are naturally allured by writing and its products. Furthermore, since Writing Centers are often perceived as residing on the outer boundaries of legitimate academic enterprises, written records often prove attractive because they support illusions of respectability and authenticity, verifying that the work is justifiable work.

On the other side is the recognition that the Writing Center business should avoid being buried under its own paperwork. Whatever records a Writing Center decides to maintain, the staff should understand what information is needed, why the information should be stored, who has the right to access that information, and how can this work be done with the minimum number and length of forms. As C. Michael Smith points out in his article "Efficiency and Insecurity: A Case Study in Form Design and Records Management," while "each writing center has to develop its own forms and systems consistent with its own needs," the cardinal principle for designing any system is to keep it "lean and trim" (121). Don't bother to measure and store information unless you also need to retrieve it and deliver it.

Because each Writing Center functions in a different context, with different missions and personnel fulfilling those missions, it is futile to expect that one record-keeping system could work for all programs. For example, Smith's article discusses the possible advantages of a record keeping system based on referral forms completed by the instructors sending students to the Writing Center. In our situation at Coe College, however, we seldom have students directly sent to us by faculty, and we have never used a formalized referral system. Because Coe is a small college with only 80 full-time faculty, most referrals can be handled with an instructor simply calling the Writing Center Director or informally recommending to the student that she should consider using the Writing Center before submitting her next paper.

While we have shunned the written referral form, our Writing Center has used several techniques for tracking and analyzing what we do as a Writing Center. We maintain a scrapbook and have one or two staff members responsible for photographing ourselves in our working and playing. A more formal exploration occurs in our weekly, one-hour course, "Topics in Composition," required of all staff members. This class requires journal writing, written meditations on our consulting experiences during the term, and discussion of issues that come up in our work in the Writing Center. And finally, there is the Consultant Conference Form, the written summary we produce for each of our student conferences (see Appendix A for example of forms from the last two years). Except for the daily log book--used for maintaining our work schedule and recording appointments--the Consultant

Conference Forms are the only documents we maintain for recording what happens in our Writing Center.

Without question our Writing Center could function without any such record-keeping system. The college administration has fully supported the independent freedom of the Writing Center and has never asked for any data or documentation to verify our credibility. Because Coe has no required composition courses, we are not involved in assisting required freshmen writing assignments where instructors need a record of what occurred in the sessions. Despite this freedom, we keep a fairly detailed record system attempting to describe what occurs in our tutoring sessions and to quantify "objectively" those descriptions. We do this for several reasons.

The primary purpose for using our Consultant Conference Form is to ensure that our staff members think about various requirements and opportunities in their conferences. Some of the required details are painfully obvious, but it's important to know facts such as the student's name, the course, and the instructor. The form prompts the consultant to ask about the assignment, to consider what kind of paper is being attempted, and to discover from the students what help they are seeking. The Consultant Conference Form also invites the consultant to think back over each session after it is finished: replaying its memorable moments, meditating on what transpired, evaluating what the session may have meant to the student, and assessing where the writing seemed to be going.

A second benefit from our current record-keeping system is in the protection provided for both the Writing Center and the students. For example, instructors are occasionally bothered by a paper, suspecting plagiarism or unfair assistance rendered to the student in the writing process. The Consultant Conference Form enables us to testify about what happened in the writing conference, what help was sought, and what help was given. Last year, a student in an introductory literature course was given an "F" on a revision of a paper because the instructor was certain that the student had not written the new version. The student responded that he had been to the Writing Center and through a series of three conferences had rethought the paper, adopting a different approach to the assignment. His defense was supported by three Conference Forms, each describing the stages the student was going through in completing a new paper on his old subject. When the instructor read the Conference Forms (which are available both to the instructor and the student), the grade was changed from an "F" to a "B."

Another value of the form is in providing interested staff members with research opportunities for studying and understanding what happens within a Writing Center environment. One function of the Writing Center should be to improve the educational experiences of the students working there. In addition to the benefits of learning about writing and how to work with people, the Writing Center scene offers a wonderful laboratory for inquiry. Although our college is not primarily a research institution, the Writing Center can provide undergraduates with opportunities to conduct studies in fields as diverse rhetoric, sociology, psychology, and education. Within the past year, nine different staff members have worked on one or more research papers using information drawn from Writing Center files and our Conference Forms.

One important characteristic of our record-keeping system should be pointed out: staff members redesign the form each year. One reason for these modifications is to fight the contempt bred through familiarity. No one enjoys facing the same paperwork year after year. Furthermore, the development of new forms allows for consultants to help decide what questions our form will ask and how they can be asked. As we rewrite our conference forms, our discussions focus on reconsidering what kinds of research paths we wish to explore during the next year: what elusive truths would we like to know and how can we use our forms to uncover them?

For the last two years we have used Consultant Conference Forms designed for capturing data that can be maintained on a database. Much of this activity has been experimental and generated out of curiosity to learn about how databases can work. But we also had some practical goals. We wanted a system for quickly sorting and printing out information about how students employ the Writing Center. If an instructor asked which students had visited the Writing Center and for what purposes, we wanted to have the capability for efficiently producing that information. We also wanted to compare our individual and group impressions of our tutoring with the portrait that emerges after the database has crunched the various data. Again, the database functions as a teaching tool: giving everyone in the Writing Center the experience of working with such beasts; giving everyone the opportunity to consider what kinds of truths and falsehoods these programs generate. Maybe they're a small means for establishing some links between the infamous "two cultures." As one consultant commented, the use of a computer database "catapults us into the nineties, where the education of college students belongs." And, not incidentally, databases can be fun to play with, just as writing is fun.

The database opens an attractive avenue for strengthening our credibility with the faculty and administration. Numbers are important in the college environment. Staffing decisions and budget allocations frequently depend on how many students use what services. While the reputation of the Writing Center at a small college depends primarily on the grapevine, we would be foolish not to keep records that can bolster our defensive stance. Some of the research projects, for example, are written up and distributed to the faculty in biweekly "Information Sheets" from the Writing Center. These reports use data that would not be available without the Conference Forms. Perhaps these records are "self-defensive," reflecting the Director's tendency to paranoia, but the database can substantiate intuitions, open up new lines of thinking, raise questions about long-held assumptions, and tabulate quickly and efficiently who came and why.

As for the establishment of a database capable of analyzing our data, we initially chose Dbase III+, the leading database program currently on the market. The Writing Center had a computer science major familiar with the program, and through the college we had access to the program (which otherwise would have been prohibitively expensive for us to purchase). Using the Consultant Response Form as a model, we constructed a database allowing for data to be entered on the screen according to the same format.

During our first year of using the database, we encountered a number of frustrations. One major problem was that our three Zenith computers in the Writing Center had neither sufficient memory (RAM) nor storage capacity for handling the size of our database. Although we had originally intended to experiment with entering data directly into the computer without using the paper forms, our dependence on a computer outside the Writing Center required that we continue filling out the paper forms and waiting until later to type the data into the database. This delay also meant that we could not quickly produce documents tabulating recent Writing Center usage. Only toward the end of the school year did we obtain funding to purchase a new computer with a hard disk drive that could handle our database.

We also experienced some problems with Dbase III+. Because of the complexity of the program and the difficulty of understanding the manuals, our knowledge of the program's procedures and capabilities was at times inadequate for the tasks we wanted done. With the exception of our one computer science major, we had no one in the Writing Center with a sufficiently skilled working knowledge of the program and its idiosyncracies. For reasons that we never ascertained, we experienced difficulties with memo fields used for recording the conference summaries; the entered data became unzipped and jumbled. Our only solution was to retype the memo fields, a time-consuming enterprise.

Because of these difficulties with Dbase III+, we decided after our first year to switch to a new database program, PC-File:dB, a Jim Button Shareware program. Several factors contributed to our decision: we liked the clarity and simplicity of this program; it had an excellent manual for explaining how the program works; no longer were we dependent on a computer science major for solving all our database problems; the Pc-File:dB offered simpler procedures for printing data tables, graphs, and charts; the program was capable of reading and working with files originally constructed using DBase III+; and the shareware program cost only $75, significantly less than the price we would have to pay for an updated version of Dbase III+.

The remainder of this paper will discuss some conferencing patterns that became evident after using the DBase III+ and the PC-File:dB for analyzing our tutoring sessions from the fall '88 term. According to our log book we had approximately 625 student conferences from September 1 to the middle of December. Of those conferences 484 had Consultant Response Forms entered in the database. Concerning the conferences not recorded in the database, most were either very brief conferences or ones where the consultant did not feel the conference was important or substantial.

The first conference factor we looked at was the consultant's perception of the "mode of the conference." Consultants had five choices for describing what the consultant felt was the primary means for conducting the conference: Conversing, Questioning, Suggesting, Directing, or Other. In a training retreat before the beginning of the school term, the entire staff had discussed the differences among these four modes of conferences. At this introductory training session, the Writing Center Director asked the staff to use the "Other" designation as seldom as possible. Most conferences combine elements from all modes, but the staff was to determine as best they could the predominant mode for a particular session. The Writing Center's Consultant Handbook stresses the importance of informal discussion and allowing students to establish their own agenda for a conference. At the training retreat the staff had identified situations when it may be more appropriate for the tutor to become the suggestor or the director, perhaps introducing explicit directions upon which the student-writer could then build. But after that early September discussion, there was no attempt to ensure that we all had the same definitions for these four modes. In effect, we allowed the consultants to define each category and to decide which mode best described each session.

For the 413 conferences where consultants identified one predominant mode, the distribution was as follows:

Conversing	-	37% of all conferences
Questioning	-	18%
Suggesting	-	34%
Directing	-	11%

One revelation from the data was that the consultants reported using Questioning less than might be expected. Several of the weekly staff meetings focused on developing ways to use questions for helping students see what is present and missing in their writing. But the database results suggest that, however frequently consultants may rely on questions to guide a conference, the approach was either less appropriate or less appealing than the more informal Conversing or the more authoritative Suggesting or Directing.

Further analysis of the data reveals that some consultants clearly preferred certain modes in their own conferencing styles. One consultant reported that she used Conversing for 91% of her conferences while two consultants relied on Suggesting for over 60% of their conferences. The majority of the 15 consultants, however, revealed substantial diversity in their modes. Only four consultants used the same mode for more than 45% of their conferences. Ten consultants reported using at least three different modes for 10% or more of their conferences, a distribution suggesting that conference modes were often influenced by the dynamics of each situation (e.g., specific student, type of assignment, status of paper).

A second issue explored was the relationship between what help was requested by the student and what help was then offered by the consultant. In over 80% of the conferences, the forms indicate that the conference focused on what the students wanted help with. This statistic was roughly the same both for walk-in students voluntarily using the Writing Center and for students directed by their instructor to use our services. The most notable exception to this pattern concerned requests for assistance in expanding or developing a draft (Focus 7). While only 38 students sought this type of help (less than 10% of the total conferences), the consultants reported this to be a major focus in 62 of the conferences. Because expanding a draft requires further effort and time, few students are intentionally seeking that assistance unless they know a paper does not fulfill a minimum page requirement. This problem of undeveloped papers, however, was frequently identified by consultants, presenting a challenge as they felt obliged to move students in a direction they had not chosen.

One surprise from the "help wanted" information was that we had fewer requests for assistance with editing and proofreading than we had expected. Although 20% of the forms record that students sought assistance with editing and proofreading, 74% of these conferences were with ESL students for whom problems with grammar and editing are frequently their most troublesome areas. The numbers also indicate that fewer than 5% of the American students voluntarily using the Writing Center came specifically for assistance with editing and proofreading. These students were interested in more than some last-minute bandaids when they chose to use our services.

Another surprise was that we had several items in the "help wanted" list that were rarely used. For example, we had only 2 conferences in which students sought guidance in locating information or library work (Focus 9), and only 4 conferences where these issues became a focus of the discussion. The same pattern was also true for understanding rhetorical situation, audience, voice (Focus 16). Here the low number of responses was more likely a reflection of the consultants not feeling comfortable with that selection. Two other choices with total percentages well under 10% were Focus 5 (organizing ideas, draft) and Focus 14 (documentation; paper format).

A third area of interest in our study was in considering what patterns of conferencing emerged for specific subgroups of students. The two identifiable groups we most frequently dealt with were international students for whom English is not their native language (ESL) and students enrolled in the Reading/Writing Workshop, a course in academic reading and writing strategies that enrolls about 15% of the freshmen class.

Concerning the international students, about 10% of Coe's student body is comprised of ESL students but they were responsible for 37% of our conferences for the fall term. Perhaps we were guilty of unfairly categorizing these students, but we had expected that in the meetings with ESL students the conference modes of Suggesting or Directing would be used more frequently than Conversing or Questioning. We based this expectation on the fact that they would often be shy or not confident about their speaking skills. It was also true that many of them were required to come to the Writing Center and thus might be resisting the entire procedure. The consultants, however, reported virtually no significant difference between the pattern for ESL degree-seeking students and for all other students. For example, Conversing was reported to be the dominant mode in 37% of the conferences and Directing in only 11%. The pattern was consistently within 5 percentage points of what we found for all conferences. Where we did detect a difference in tutoring styles was in our conferences with students in the ESL program, an intensive language program for students with TOEFL scores below 500. Although we had fewer than 20 sessions with these students, 90% of them were reported to be conferences where the consultant was either the Suggestor (45%) or the Director (45%). In an attempt to broaden our range of experiences with these students, our new conference form for this year includes a Focus option that is specifically directed to conferences where the consultant and student simply talk about their assignments and academic work.

As for the various Foci of conferences with the degree-seeking ESL students (all with TOEFL scores above 525), these sessions followed the patterns for all conferences with three exceptions. One item, previously mentioned, was that ESL students were more likely to ask for assistance with editing and proofreading their papers. They were also more likely to seek help with Focus 8, trimming and tightening a draft (55% of requests for assistance in this area came from ESL students). This higher than expected percentage may have occurred because many of these ESL students were in a freshman course that required a series of weekly papers with a maximum of two pages per paper, a requirement some of the students had some difficulty meeting. One consultant also suggested that ESL students may have a tendency to repeat themselves and to write around a subject--rather than getting right to the point.

A third divergence was perhaps the most interesting. The ESL conferences seldom dealt with starting a paper or generating ideas (only 12% of the conferences in these two areas occurred with the ESL group). Most of the consultants felt that the ESL students were intelligent and conscientious: their problem was not with coming up with ideas but with translating their ideas into respectable papers and clear English.

While the ESL students reported little trouble generating ideas for their papers (Focus 3), a second group of students was frequently seeking and receiving help in this area. Although the Reading/Writing Workshop (RWW) students comprised 24% of our conferences for the term, 64% of the conferences dealing with Focus 2 (getting started) and 59% with Focus 3 (generating ideas) involved students from the three sections of this course. This class is comprised of students who did not graduate in the top 40% of their high school class, had an ACT composite score below 19, and scored in the bottom 25% on the college's writing test for incoming freshmen. The conference summaries reveal that many of these students came to their conferences with either no draft or a rudimentary beginning to their paper. In many instances these students were frustrated with their assignments and had problems understanding what they should be doing in their papers.

This group of RWW students also had an unusually high percentage of conferences dealing with the analysis of a reading assignment and how to respond to the accompanying assignment. Although we advertise ourselves as a "writing" center, many of these conferences became exercises in modeling various reading techniques these students might apply to their texts. Perhaps because these students encountered so many problems with their assignments--and because their instructors required them to come for tutoring--the consultants' conference summaries frequently indicated that the sessions did not always run smoothly. Almost 20% of the conference summaries included comments expressing the consultant's frustration over the student's unresponsiveness or absence of commitment to the task. We know that we frequently get converts from students initially hostile or skeptical about using our services. In the spring term of 1989, for example, 69%

of the freshmen voluntarily coming in for a conference came from the 30% of the freshmen who had instructors requiring them in the fall to have at least one conference. But we don't have universal success. The conference forms are a frequent reminder of how frustrating it can be working with uncooperative students.

After wading through these findings and the many other reams of computer printouts, we perhaps need to pause and consider what we learn from all these numbers. We might suggest a few benefits. First, we have learned how to produce various kinds of quantitative portraits of our activities that can be fed to various audiences. We can produce class printouts that tabulate daily, weekly, monthly or semester-long portraits of how students from specific classes have used the Writing Center (see Appendix B for an example). We can produce graphs and charts which enable an academic dean or an instructor to glance quickly through a report and gain some feel for what we are doing. And we have done this with a single form that simultaneously serves as a guide for consultants as they reconsider previous conferences and prepare for new ones.

The major benefit of the forms and the database, however, is that the information can help guide the training of new consultants and the retraining of the old pros. If we know, for example, that students from particular classes tend to encounter specific kinds of difficulties (e.g., ESL students trimming their drafts), we can do a better job of preparing for those conferences. As with most writing centers, the opportunities for staff development are limited. The more precise we can be in foreseeing what lies ahead, the better is the chance we can develop tutoring strategies to meet those needs. As our understanding of yesterday improves, we may do a better job of meeting tomorrow. While the primary sources of understanding come from personal experience and direct impressions, the database records are another means for constantly challenging our assumptions and introducing angles of perception that would have otherwise been overlooked. For example, last year's conference forms have led us to reexamine the role of conversing and questioning in our conferences. Over the remainder of this term we will be reconsidering how we begin our conferences and how we can more effectively use good questioning techniques for initiating a discussion of a paper's ideas rather than jumping too quickly into a detailed textual analysis of a paper.

But let us end with an admission that the forms and database are at best mere supplements, products of gadgets that are attractive but hazardous to one's health when held too closely. Our primary business is always people struggling with words. It is a chaotic business, always calling us to invent new ways of relating to people, new ways of talking about the creation of new sentences. Neither fancy forms nor a sophisticated database can impart much guidance in solving those problems. Next year there will probably be a new form, combining old and new questions. We hope we will find new "slants of light," new insights from exploring what we do. But the ultimate solutions lie with the student-writers and us, working one-on-one. If the forms and database begin to block our way, let us hope we have the good sense to unplug the computers and throw the forms away.

WORKS CITED

Smith, C. Michael. "Efficiency and Insecurity: A Case Study in Form Design and Records Management." In Writing Centers: Theory and Administration. Ed. Gary A. Olson. Urbana: NCTE, 1984, 115-122.

APPENDIX A Consultant Conference Forms (1988-89)

Consultant:

CONSULTANT SCHEDULING FORM

Student's Name: Date: / /

Course: Conference Date: / /

Instructor: Conference Time:

Conference Type:

1. Walk-in
2. Self-scheduled Appt.
3. Regular Appointment
4. Instructor-directed Appt.

Assignment:

Paper Due Date:

Initial Student Comments:

What does student want help with?

1. Understanding assignment
2. Getting started
3. Generating ideas; what to say
4. Topic/thesis focus
5. Organizing ideas, draft
6. Understanding teacher comments
7. Expanding/developing draft
8. Trimming, tightening draft
9. Locating info; library work
10. Revising sentence structure
11. Editing grammar, spelling
12. Proofreading
13. Word processing; CAI
14. Documentation; paper format
15. Finding unidentified problems
16. Understanding rhetorical situation, audience, voice
17. Other:

Initial Consultant Reading Comments:

Form for 1989-90

CONSULTANT CONFERENCE FORM DB ____________

Student: ______________________________ Consultant: ____________________
F S J Sr (Last name, first name) ESL ______

Course: ______________________________ Conference Date: / /

Instructor: __________________________ Paper Due Date: / /

Conference Type: 1. Walk-in 3. Required on Regular Basis
2. Self-scheduled 4. Instructor-directed

Assignment: ____

____

1. Essay/Theme 2. Research Paper 3. Report/Critique 4. Journalism
5. Poetry/Fiction 6. Thesis/Honors Paper 7. Job/Grad Application 8. Other

Draft of paper: yes ______ no _______ Draft length: ____________

What does student want help with?

Initial Reading Comments:

Primary Focus of Conference: (circle two)

1. Understanding assignment
2. Getting started; generating ideas
3. Thesis focus; clarification of ideas
4. Organizing ideas; structure
5. Understanding teacher comments
6. Expanding/trimming draft
7. Revising style, sentence structure
8. Editing, proofreading, grammar check
9. Library work, documentation, paper format
10. Reading problems; understanding texts
11. Conversation; informal discussion
12. Other: ______________________________

Conference Summary:
Status of
paper/
issues
covered

Consultant
suggestions/
Student
decisions-
discoveries

Projection

Conference evaluation: 1 2 3100 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Consultant: ____________

CONSULTANT RESPONSE FORM

Student's name: ______________________________ Conference Date: / /

Course/Assignment: ____

Student had draft: yes ____ no _____ Draft length: ______ pages

Primary Focus of Conference

1. Understanding assignment
2. Getting started
3. Generating ideas; what to say
4. Topic/thesis focus
5. Organizing ideas, draft
6. Understanding teacher comments
7. Expanding/developing draft
8. Trimming, tightening draft
9. Locating info; library work
10. Revising sentence structure
11. Editing grammar, spelling
12. Proofreading
13. Word processing; CAI
14. Documentation; paper format
15. Finding unidentified proble
16. Understanding rhetorical situation, audience, voice
17. Other:

Primary Mode of Conference

1. Conversing
2. Questioning
3. Suggesting
4. Directing
5. Other:

Conference Summary

Appendix B - Database printout (PC-File:dB)

"WAYS OF KNOWING": CORE COURSE CONFERENCES

October 19, 1989 at 12:33 p.m.

STUDENT	CONSULTANT	CONDATE	INSTRUCTOR	D	DRL	FO	FO	ASSIGN
,MIKE	KENNEDY	10/04/89	HOOVER	Y	2	5	7	TO COMPARE TWO REPORTS OF SOCRATES TRIAL AND DEATH
ANDERSON, TIM	GIBNEY	09/17/89		Y	1	6	11	JOB
BERNA, ED	EXEY	09/27/89	BURKE	Y	3	6	8	WRITE ON THE INNOCENCE OF SOCRATES
BERNA, ED	KASSEBAUM, K.	08/09/26	BURKE	Y	0	4		SOCRATES' INNOCENCE
BLAND, CHUCK	POPSON	10/08/89	HOOVER	Y	3	5	11	REVISE COMPARISON OF PLATO & XENOPHON
BLOGDGETT SARAH	POPSON	09/26/89	BURKE	N	0	2	10	DISCUSSION OF INNOCENCE/GUILT OF SOCRATES
BUDHWANI, KARIM	EXEY	09/18/89	COLE	Y	3	3	6	CRITO QUESTIONS
BUDHWANI, KARIM	EXEY	09/18/89	COLE	Y	2	3	6	WHAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE DOES SOCRATES HAVE; HOW FIND IT?
BUDHWANI, KARIM	EXEY	09/25/89	COLE	Y	7	6	8	JOB AND SOCRATES & THEIR HUMANISTIC WAYS OF KNOWING
BUDHWANI, KARIM	EXEY	09/18/89	COLE	Y	3	3	6	WHAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE DOES SOCRATES SEEK IN THE CRITO?
BUDHWANI, KARIM I.	EXEY	09/11/89	COLE	Y	3	6	8	EXPLAIN WHY JOB KNEW WHAT HE KNEW
BUDHWANI, KARIM I.	JOHNSON, T.	09/11/89	COLE	Y	3	7	8	JOB - HOW HE KNOWS WHAT HE KNOWS
BURNS, DAWN	GIBNEY	09/17/89	KELLAR	Y	2	8		JOB
BURNS, DAWN	MARTIN	09/15/89	KELLAR	Y	2	1	4	WRITE ABOUT JOB, CH 28
CAVINESS, TAMMY	GIBNEY	09/17/89	KELLAR	Y	2	4		JOB
COLE, DEREK	ZEISSET	09/17/89	KELLAR	Y	1	6		JOB 28 SUMMARY AND EVALUATION
DAURICE	DOUGHERTY	08/09/05	DEJONG	Y	3	4	5	REWRITE A PAPER ON OPINION OF ELIHU'S ARGUMENT OPPOSED
DAVIDSON, BARRY	KLOSTERMANN	09/20/89	DREXLER	Y	1	5	12	READ PASSAGE AND WRITE A CLEAR SUMMARY
DENZLER, KIM	DOUGHERTY	10/05/89	HOOVER	Y	2	3	4	REWRITE PAPER COMPARING XENOPHON AND PLATO ON SOCRATES
EASTMAN, ANDY	EXEY	09/11/89	COLE	Y	3	6	8	EXPLAIN WHY JOB KNEW WHAT HE KNEW
FARWELL, AMY	EXEY	09/15/89	KELLAR	N	0	1	2	SUMMARIZE CH. 28 & EVALUATED PERSONAL THOUGHTS-WISDOM
FARWELL, AMY	PREGLER	09/18/89	KELLAR	Y	1	4	12	JOB
FOLKER, AMY	GIBNEY	09/17/89	HAY	Y	4	6	8	JOB
FORESTELL, KRISTY	EXEY	09/19/89	HAY	Y	4	3	6	ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY, JOB
FORESTELL, KRISTY	EXEY	08/09/19	HAY	Y	5	6	8	ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY ON WHY JOB IGNORES THE ADVICE
FORESTELL, KRISTY	POPSON	10/05/89	HAY	Y	4	3	6	TO REVISE ESSAY ON JOB
FOWLER, JIM	JOHNSON, K.	00/89/01	HELLER	Y	2	6	7	REVISE ESSAY ABOUT LEARNING EXPERIENCE
FREYERMUTH, LYN	MARTIN	09/25/89	PUFALL	Y	0	3	4	COMPARE/CONTRAST JOB & SOCRATES
FRIEDRICHSEN, SARA	BRASSER	09/22/89	KNUPFER	N	0	1	2	COMPARE JOB,SOCRATES, AND ZEN ON SOME POINT OF DISTICTI
GRAY, JANYCE	KENNEDY	09/14/89	KELLAR	Y	1	7	8	SUMMARIZE JOB 28 AND WRITE OWN IDEAS ABOUT WISDOM
GUNTHER, LISA	POPSON	09/14/89	KELLAR	N	0	2	11	INTERPRETATION OF CH. 28 BOOK OF JOB
HANSEN, TIM	BRENDEL	09/19/89	HAY	Y	1	7	8	ADDRESS ? JOB & SOCRATES BOTH ASK
HANSEN, TIM	BRASSER	09/20/89	HAY	Y	4	7	8	COMPARE RESPONSES OF JOB/SOCRATES TO WHY BAD THINGS HAP
HANSEN, TIM	BRENDEL	10/03/89	HAY	Y	4	7	8	TO RIVISE HIS WOK SOCRATES/JOB COMPARISON PAPER
HANSEN, TIM	BRASSER	10/06/89	HAY	Y	4	7	8	REVISE JOB & SOCRATES PAPER
HARTWIG, JEFFINER	ZEISSET	09/24/89	PUFALL	Y	5	6		COMPARE JOB & SOCRATES--METHODS OF SEARCHING FOR ANSWER
HASHBORTER, CRAIG	KASSEBAUM, K.	09/20/89	WOLVERTON	Y	4	8		COMPARE/CONTRAST JOB/SOCRATES
HECK, TERESA	PREGLER	09/15/89	KELLAR	N	0	2	3	SUMMARIZE "WISDOM HYMN" OF JOB
HECK, TERESA	GIBNEY	09/17/89	KELLER	Y	2	8	12	JOB
HECK, TERESA	EXEY	09/17/89	KELLAR	Y	3	6	8	SUMMARIZE CHAP. 28 JOB & GIVE OWN VIEW OF WISDOM
HECK, TERESA	PREGLER	09/18/89	KELLAR	Y	2	4	6	SOCRATES, JOB AND OWN OPINION OF WISDOM
HEISNER, TERESA	KASSEBAUM, A.	09/14/89	KELLAR	N	0	2		SUMMARIZE JOB 28, DEFINE WISDOM & MEANING IN JOB 28
HOSEK, SHERI	BRASSER	09/25/08	AUSTIN	Y	3	8	9	COMPARE/CONTRAST JOB, SOCRATES. TRUTH AND REASON
HOWARD, JAMMIE	EXEY	09/12/89	CARR	N	0	1	2	PRODUCE A 4-6 PAGE PAPER OVER JOB
HOWARD, JAMMIE	EXEY	09/14/89	CARR	Y	2	3	4	PRODUCE A 4-6 PAGE PAPER OVER JOB
JOHNSON, JAMIE	POPSON	09/12/89	HOOVER	N	0	2	11	COMPARE/CONTRAST JOB PROSE & POETIC SECTIONS
JOHNSON, TRICIA	GIBNEY	08/09/10		Y	2	11		JOB- AS USUAL
JOHNSON, TRICIA	GIBNEY	09/10/89		Y	2	11		JOB - AS USUAL
JOSS, DARIN	GIBNEY	09/18/89	HAY	N	0			JOB
KASSEBAUM, ALLEN	KASSEBAUM, K.	09/19/89	HERRON	Y	3	3	7	COMPARE JOB/SOCRATES: HOW ARE THEY SIMILAR AND DIFFEREN
KEMPIN, TARA	JOHNSON, K	09/14/89	KELLAR	Y	2	3	6	SUMMARIZE CH 28 OF JOB
KEMPIN, TARA	JOHNSON, T.	10/05/89	KELLAR	Y	2	7	8	DISAGREE OR AGREE WITH A GIVEN PARAGRAPH ABOUT SCIENCE
KLOSTERMANN, NANCY	JOHNSON, K.	/ /	BURKE	N	0	2		WRITE ABOUT THE INNOCENSE OF SOCRATES
MALPAS, BRIAN	POPSON	10/08/89	HOOVER	Y	2	6	5	REVISE SOCRATES COMPARISONS BY PLATO & XENOPHON
MATTHYS, DEBBIE	JOHNSON, T.	09/12/89	HOOVER	N	0	2	11	COMPARE/CONTRAST CONTENT OF PROSE TEXT W/ POETIC CHAPTE
MATTHYS, DEBBIE	EXEY	10/03/89	HOOVER	Y	2	6	8	REVISE ROK PAPER

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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STUDENT                CONSULTANT     CONDATE  INSTRUCTOR           D DRL FO FO ASSIGN
====================== ============== ======== ==================== = === == == ==================================================
McFADDEN, SHANNON      KLOSTERMANN    10/08/89 WATKINS              Y   4 5  7  JOB'S & SOCRATES' WOK - LOGICAL OR RATIONAL
MCMEINS, REGGIE        JOHNSON, K.    08/09/05 WATSON               N   0 2  11 COMPARE JOB'S AND SOCRATES' USE OF LOGIC AND RATIONALIT
MESSER, LORI           MARTIN         09/22/89 PUFALL               Y   3 1  6  BOOK OF JOB CONTRASTED TO PLATO
MILLER, VANCE          GIBNEY         09/18/89 COLE                 Y   2 7  8  SOCRATES
NELSON, CAROL          POPSON         09/14/89 KELLAR               N   0 1  2  INTERPRETATION CH. 28 BOOK OF JOB
NEW, MELISSA           JOHNSON, T.    01/89/01 BURKE                Y   2 3     THE INNOCENCE OF SOCRATES
NIJHAWAN, SUMIT        KENNEDY        09/12/89 HOOVER               Y   0 12    COMPARE POETRY & PROSE SECTIONS OF JOB
NIJHAWAN, SUMIT        MARRS          09/20/89 HOOVER               Y   3 6  7  COMPARE XENOPHON AND PLATO ON SOCRATES
NIJHAWAN, SUMIT        DOUGHERTY      10/05/89 HOOVER               Y   3 4  5  REWRITE PAPER COMPARING XENOPHON & PLATON ON SOCRATES
NOVAK, MICHELLE        VALLEY         09/19/89 DEJONG               Y   3 3  4  Job
NOVICK,DAVID           KENNEDY        10/12/89 BURKE                Y   3 7  8  DISCUSSION OF SOCRATES'S INNOCENCE
PARAMESWAR, CHITRA     KASSEBAUM, A.  09/19/89 HAY                  Y   4 12 8  TELL WHY JOB IGNORES ADVICE FROM FRIENDS.
PARAMESWAR, CHITRA     KLOSTERMANN    09/18/89 HAY                  N   0 2     JOB'S RIGHT TO IGNORE THE ADVICE OF THE PEOPLE
PICKETTS, KELLY        GIBNEY         09/17/89 KELLAR               N   0 11    JOB
RICHMOND, BARRY        VALLEY         00/89/01 HELLER               Y   4 5  11 FIND A TRUTH IN YOUR LIFE THAT HAS CHANGED YOU
ROBERTS, JENNI         KLOSTERMAN     08/09/06 KNUFFER              Y   4 6     COMPARE SOME ASPECT OF JOB, SOCRATES, AND ZEN
RYAN, AARON            KASSEBAUM, A.  09/11/89 HOOVER               Y   2 6  8  COMPARE/CONTRAST THE POETRY OF JOB WITH THE PROSE
RYAN, AARON            DOUGHERTY      10/05/69 HOOVER               Y   3 1  11 XENOPHON AND PLATO'S ACCOUNTS OF SOCRATES' TRIAL
SCLADZIEN, JUDY        JOHNSON, T.      /  /                        Y   3 8     DO AGREE THAT SCIENCE HAS UNNECESSARY THEORIES
SEIDMAN, JEFF          KLOSTERMANN    10/15/89 JANUS                Y   3 7  8  OUTLINE IDEAS FOR JOB PAPER (TO BE HANDED IN)
SHORT, ANGIE           KLOSTERMANN    10/06/89 HOOVER               Y   2 5  8  REVISE SOCRATES/XENOPHON PAPER
SKLADZIEN, JUDY        JOHNSON, T.    09/18/89 KELLAR               Y   2 7  8  SHORT SUMMARY ON "WISDOM HYMN"
SMITH, NAOMI           KASSEBAUM, K.  09/19/00 DE JONG              Y   2 8     PAPER ON JOB:  WRITE 2 ARGUMENTS JOB GETS FROM FRIENDS
TAYLOR, PORTIA         KENNEDY        09/26/89 BURKE                N   0 3  4  INNONENCE OF SOCRATES
VOLLRATH, CARL         GIBNEY         09/17/89 KELLAR               N   0 2     JOB
VOLLRATH, CARL         EXEY           08/09/02 KELLAR               Y   1 3  8  REVISION AND EXPANSION OF FIRST PAPER
WALSH, TONY            PREGLER        10/09/89 HOOVER               Y   2 1  3  PLATO VS. XENOPHON ABOUT BEGGING THE JURY
WAZAC, KENDALYN        MARRS          10/16/89 HELLER               Y   5 9     SOCRATES PAPER
WOODWARD,ADAM          POPSON         10/01/89 RANDALL              N   0 1  9  ESSAY INTERPRETING JOB & HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH 3 FRIEND

________________________________

TOTALS:    DRLENGTH            178


Printed 85 of the 298 records.

PRIMARY SORT FIELD: STUDENT

SELECTION CRITERIA:
(COURSE="WOK")
```

EXPLANATION OF CODES:

CONDATE - Date of conference
D - Student had draft of paper at conference (Y--Yes; N--No)
DRL - Draft length in pages
FO - Focus of conference:

1. Understanding assignment
2. Getting started; generating ideas
3. Thesis focus; clarification of ideas
4. Organizing ideas; structure
5. Understanding teacher comments
6. Expanding/trimming draft
7. Revising style, sentence structure
8. Editing, proofreading, grammar check
9. Library work, documentation, paper format
10. Reading problems; understanding texts
11. Conversation; informal discussion
12. Other:

Model of Collaboration: The Peer Tutor

Johnson County Community College
Overland Park, Kansas
Ellen Mohr

Reflections of a Peer Tutor

We meet.
He writes.
I read.
He talks.
I listen.
I question.
He answers.
He cries.
I cry
He laughs.
I laugh.
I understand.
He understands.
I learn.
He learns.
And we are both made better by the experience.

My esteem for peer tutors has increasingly grown over the past nine years as I have observed them at work in our Writing Center at Johnson County Community College (JCCC). Granted, it would be nice to have graduate assistants or English majors who are upperclassmen to assist students with their writing problems, but I still wouldn't give up my upperclass peer tutors. Contrary to other professionals or paraprofessionals who teach and are expected to do so, peer tutors do not teach; they collaborate. Once tutors and clients understand their roles in the session, great exchanges can and do take place. Smulyan and Bolton in their recently published article "Classroom and Writing Center Collaborations: Peers as Authorities" note that the major differences between collaboration in the classroom and in the writing center are "social context" and "knowledgeable peers" (44). The "knowledge" is simply that these tutors have already experienced the assignments or course work and they have been trained more extensively in the tutor process. Thus they are what we might call "model collaborators." At our college peer tutors have often been recommended by instructors more for their leadership in collaborative sessions than for their excellence in writing.

If students help one another, we call the act "collaboration." If a tutor helps a student and both gain from the experience, the process is collaboration. "Collaboration" suggests sharing; "peer" suggests equality. Collaboration does not require professional training; peer tutors are not voices of authority. Collaboration does imply participation; thus both student and tutor are providing input to the session. Tutors bring to the writing center their classroom experience and their writing skills. If chosen carefully, they also bring social skills, such as friendliness, poise, open-mindedness, and honesty.

They also possess good interpersonal communication skills, such as being good listeners.

As role models for classroom collaboration, writing center peer tutors follow specific guidelines. First of all, both the tutor and the student must participate in the session. In other words, tutors expect their clients to pull their own weight. Reigstad and McAndrew label this model for tutoring "student-centered." "Students do most of the talking and most of the work on their papers; they also determine the direction of the conference. Tutors ask open-ended as well as probe-and-prompt questions and listen as students describe their composing processes, the problems they encountered, and their opinions of their drafts before offering reactions and suggestions. The tutor-student relationship is consistently conversant-conversant, and the most frequently adopted tutor roles are listener, partner in writing, and interested reader" (Reigstad and McAndrew 5). Tutors follow a hierarchy of concerns as Donald Murray suggests in his many articles on collaborative learning. These concerns do not include mechanics but instead lead the student/client to analyze organization, development and style. We use the following list:

1. Assignment and goals - What is the assignment? Define the rhetorical problem.
2. Clear focus - What do you want to say about....?
3. Audience and Aim--To whom is this essay or writing addressed and why are you writing it? (expressive, expository, persuasive)
4. Organization - Descriptive, Narrative, Classification, Evaluation.
5. Paragraphs - Transitions and reminder signs, coherence.
6. Sentences - Variety, Structure, Completeness.
7. Words or Word choice - appropriateness, diction, voice.
8. Style - clarity

Note that grammar and mechanics are not discussed in early draft stages. Most of our tutors deal primarily with the first four concerns and rarely touch on the others, mainly because of time factors. These latter problems, along with the proofreading skills, can be dealt with on graded essays which we encourage students to bring to the Center early in the semester. This strategy not only helps the student view the graded paper as another step in the process of improving writing, but it also keeps the responsibility of the total essay and its correctness where it belongs--on the student writer.

Tutors must learn early in their training and through observation of instructors or professional tutors that they must lead the client. By questioning whatever has been produced by the student writer, tutors show that they are not satisfied with the obvious. By gently leading students but not answering for them, tutors know when to pull back so that their ideas do not become the students´ written words. Several strategies to enhance this questioning skill are listed below:

1.) to have tutors practice questioning one another in mock sessions,
2.) to encourage and sharpen listening skills by sitting in on one another´s sessions with students,
3.) by getting student clients to read aloud their writing.

In any collaborative setting, both participants should gain from or share in the learning. We have seen how the writing center client gains by having a well trained audience, a reader who has learned how to question, but we sometimes overlook the gain of the tutor. Tutors heighten their awareness of the diversity yet commonality of all writing and the writing process. Furthermore, they develop a better understanding of collaborative learning, and they increase or sharpen their interpersonal skills, especially listening. They, also, are opened to a vast range of personal experiences and knowledge.

To ensure the quality of learning and avoid "teaching," tutors are taught how to ask open-ended questions based on the hierarchy of concerns mentioned earlier. They practice by role-modeling during staff training. They meet monthly to share tutor experiences, and tutor/student sessions are regularly monitored with discretion. Tutors are further enlightened by having instructional materials made available to them. New computer software programs are first tried by tutors, giving them an opportunity to experiment with new writing strategies which are presented in programs like Writers Helper II, the Writers Resource Kit, Persuasive Aim, and Grammatik 3. New text books and workbooks are consistently being added to the Writing Center library, and tutors pick up on new terms and new ways of enhancing the writing process. The Writing Center Newsletter, produced by Muriel Harris from Purdue and the Writing Center Journal produced by the National Writing Centers Association, along with other newsletters and articles, are also made available to the peer tutors. It's important that the tutors remain open to instruction from a variety of sources. Once tutors believe they "know all," they cross the line into "voice of authority" and the collaboration ends.

When collaborative learning is practiced in the writing center, it is enhanced in the classroom. When collaborative learning is encouraged in the classroom, the writing center benefits. The writing center provides a natural setting for a number of collaborative efforts. The writing center is a less intimidating environment than the classroom. Social exchanges promote a freedom of expression and a casual attitude. Collaboration takes place not only between clients and tutors, but also among the tutors and instructors employed in the center. Instructors serve as models for collaboration by sharing their own writing with the center's staff. Instructors often read rough drafts for conference papers or reports to colleagues or to tutors, asking for suggestions or additions. Another collaborative effort is the Writing Center newsletter, published quarterly by our tutors. They plan what will go in the issue, they write the articles, and they collaborate with each other about what they have written. Clients visiting the Center witness the exchanges among the tutors and may pattern the example in the classroom.

In conclusion, several theories have been substantiated through my observation of our Writing Center's peer tutors these past nine years. Students who do well in collaborative learning environments make excellent peer tutors. There is a connection between classroom strategies and writing center strategies in that collaborative learning enhances both settings. Students who write together and share their writing give each other immediate feedback which can strengthen writing skills. The student who tutors learns information in a new and possibly better way. Thus, information is retained longer. Simply put, employing peer tutors as model collaborators in writing/learning promotes collaboration as a means to better writing and as an important step in the process of writing.

Works Cited

Reigstad, Thomas J., and Donald McAndrew. Training Tutors for Writing Conferences. Urbana: NCTE, 1984.

Smulyan, Lisa and Kristin Bolton. "Classroom and Writing Center Collaborations: Peers as Authorities," The Writing Center Journal 9.2 (1989): 43-49.

Judy Strickland

A MODEL FOR A CAMPUS-WIDE WRITING CENTER

Southeast Missouri State University Writing Outcomes Program: The Roles of Writing Associates

The Writing Outcomes Program at Southeast Missouri State University is unique in that it integrates three approaches within a single administrative unit set apart from the Department of English. In particular, the Writing Outcomes Program is responsible for encouraging and assisting in the integration of writing assignments across the disciplines, administering the junior-level writing proficiency requirement, and supporting and developing services within the Writing Center.

Six positions are associated with the Writing Outcomes Program: Director of Writing Outcomes, Director of the Writing Center, Coordinator of Writing Assessment, and three Writing Associates.

As Writing Associates, our roles are varied in the Writing Center. One of our responsibilities besides tutoring is to give seminars on word processing to students. Last year we became so overwhelmed by students who came in individually to learn word processing that this year we began setting up seminars for entire classes. At the beginning of the year, we made many trips to the education department to give seminars there to accommodate more students since we only have five word processors in the Writing Center, and the education department has 14. Next fall we plan to set up seminars for faculty who can in turn teach their students word processing. Although we think that these word processing seminars are a worthwhile service, we do not feel that they are our number one priority.

The Writing Associates also have the duty of signing students on PLATO, our computer terminal that contains many lessons which are helpful to students who have mechanical problems. Since PLATO holds over 300 lessons, we have compiled a list of the most beneficial lessons and sent the list to English instructors. Now the instructors can send their students to the Writing Center to work on PLATO with the instructions to work on particular lessons having to do with a specific problem.

We also give seminars on preparing for the 75-hour Proficiency Test, which is a graduation requirement, and have found that students who attend these seminars seem to do better on the test than students who don't. The seminars are given twice each semester shortly before the proficiency test is administered. We give the students sample tests and advise them to buy our Writing Proficiency booklet, which gives criteria for scoring the test and sample questions and responses. They may also write on a sample test question and bring their writing back in to the Writing Center to be critiqued.

One of our duties (although not one of our favorite ones) is to counsel with students who have failed the proficiency test. Some of these students have waited till their senior year to take the test even though they are urged to enroll for it the same semester that they accumulate 75 hours. Consequently, some students' graduations are held up, and they come to us in a desperate state of mind. We suggest that these students come to the Writing Center to be tutored before they take the test again, or we present them with the portfolio options, from which they can choose.

The Writing Associates also work very closely with the Coordinator of Writing Assessment in helping with holistic scoring workshops, which are given twice a year for faculty across the campus. Approximately 150 faculty are trained to score the exit and proficiency exams. We are also trained to score, and we help with the scoring each semester.

We also go to classes to speak on whatever the instructor requests, whether it is how to write an essay or a term paper or to discuss APA style. We have even given a seminar on taking essay tests at a men's dorm.

Last year, we attempted something new: The six of us wrote and produced a Writing Outcomes Newsletter, which was distributed to all faculty members. Our goal is to publish a newsletter each semester.

In addition to working in the Writing Center and with writing assessment, we work closely with the Director of Writing Outcomes. He has established a pilot Writing Across the Curriculum program in which he works individually with ten faculty members each semester on developing and evaluating writing assignments. The faculty receive a stipend to be in the program and meet with him two to three times monthly during which time he advises them on devising and scoring writing assignments. This program directly affects the Writing Center and particularly the Writing Associates since we see the results of his work by the increased number of students coming to the Writing Center from all disciplines.

Since the three Writing Associates teach English composition courses in addition to our duties in the Writing Center, we feel that we have a link to every phase of the writing sequence at Southeast. We are proud to be a part of a campus-wide Writing Center.

Carolyn Begley

Achieving Campus-Wide Involvement

At Southeast we like to work with more than just the student. To get instructors across the campus involved, we employ a variety of techniques. First of all, we solicit assignments from them and, when available, model student papers. We keep these items in a file so that when the contributing instructors' students come to the Writing Center for help, we are familiar with the assignment and have an idea of what the instructor is looking for in a good paper.

For instance, earlier this semester we had a student wanting help on a research paper for an art class. The student was not sure what was being asked of her. As a result, Judy Strickland, one of the Writing Associates in the Writing Center, contacted the art instructor who then sent us a copy of the assignment. The assignment was still not clear to us, so Mrs. Strickland again contacted the instructor. Once we understood the assignment, we were able to help several students. In addition, our secretary made a copy of the "A" paper one of the students wrote, and a model paper is now in our files.

Another instructor we worked with wanted us to present an essay writing seminar to his students. Dr. Dennis Holt, the director of Writing Across the Curriculum, suggested we base our seminar on the scoring criteria we use for the writing proficiency examination. He also suggested we use one of the instructor's own assignments that we had on file and that the students were familiar with to illustrate our points. In this way we were able to tailor our seminar to the instructor's class.

In addition, a number of instructors like to send their classes to the Writing Center to receive help on their writing assignments. We are often inundated with students because of this service, but we believe it helps the students improve their writing skills and gets them to use our services for other assignments in other classes. And the service helps the instructors who can concentrate on the papers' content without worrying about mechanical errors.

We also work directly with the instructors who refer students to the Center. Before I started working at the Center, I was sending my own composition students there for additional help. The tutors, I discovered, cared about what I had to say concerning my students and, in addition, sent reports to me regarding their progress. The Writing Center continues to involve instructors in remediating students' writing problems, thereby coordinating the tutors' and instructors' efforts in helping the students.

A final example I might give on how we at the Writing Center work with instructors across the campus has to do with creating assignments. We often suggest ways they can create writing assignments or improve their existing writing assignments. The latter must be approached very diplomatically! In September we had an entire class come to the Center to get help on rewriting their papers for a theatre course. The assignment that had been given was way over the heads of the students in this freshman level course. In addition, the instructor had written rather snide remarks on their first drafts. As a result, Dr. Gaskins, the Writing Center director, and Carolyn Begley, a Writing Associate, visited the instructor and, as diplomatically as possible, suggested ways his assignments could be made more suitable for freshmen, and at the same time showed him how he could make his paper comments more constructive and less destructive. While we cannot claim that his assignments are now crystal clear, we have seen a definite improvement, and we will continue to work with him.

By working with instructors in building our files, by presenting seminars, by reading their classes' papers, by personally informing them of their students' progress, and by helping them create or improve assignments, we have been able to make the Writing Center more useful to both them and their students.

Debra [illegible]

How the Writing Center Works with Assessment

Writing assessment under the Writing Outcomes Program occurs twice for most students at Southeast. WP002 is the final exam for the Written Expression course, Rhetoric and Critical Thinking, which is the equivalent of a Composition II course. WP003, a writing test which students must pass in order to graduate, is administered to students who have completed 75 hours of course work.

There are several reasons for this two-tiered system. First, the Writing Outcomes Program can determine if students' writing skills remain constant during their academic career. Experts in the field of assessment have cautioned against administering tests which serve as graduation requirements that are not tied substantially to the students' curriculum. Therefore, by creating a pre- and post-test situation, the effectiveness of instruction in the Written Expression course and writing-across-the-curriculum can be assessed.

Secondly, students who take the exam at the end of their Written Expression course have the opportunity to become familiar with the WP003 test format before taking the exam to satisfy the graduation requirement. Thus, students are given an indication of the probability of their passing the writing proficiency exam early in their academic career.

The booklet, "The Writing Proficiency Test," illustrates the cooperative effort involved in emphasizing the importance of writing on our campus. This booklet, which is published by the Writing Outcomes Program, describes the writing proficiency test format and discusses the six writing traits which are considered during evaluation of the test. These traits include focus, development, organization, style, correctness, and appropriate documentation. Holistic scoring procedures are explained and scoring traits that describe each of the scores (0-6) are provided. In addition, the booklet includes sample Part I and Part II questions and essay examples taken from actual student writings which exemplify each of the scores.

Both the WP002 and WP003 are two-part tests composed of a Part I fifty-minute personal essay and a Part II seventy-minute persuasive essay. To emphasize the process approach to writing, the Part II prompt is on a topic that is related to the Part I subject. The Part II prompt is accompanied by two pages of readings (4-5 excerpts from popular publications), which students are required to incorporate into their own essays. Both tests are given on Saturday mornings. The WP002 exam is considered the final exam for the course. As the course final, the exam is scored in whatever way the instructor elects. This fall, however, the English Department faculty voted to make the exam count for 10-20% of the course grade. It is scored holistically and kept on file in the Writing Center.

Writing prompts are created by faculty members and evaluated by a committee composed of English and ESL faculty, a psychometrician, and a representative of minority affairs. Before receiving the committee's approval, prompts and readings must be determined to be appropriate for all elements of our diverse student population regardless of their age, race, or ethnic/cultural background. After the prompt is accepted, it is further tested in composition classes and re-evaluated before being used as a writing test topic.

Both the WP002 and WP003 exams are scored holistically under carefully supervised conditions by scorers from various disciplines across campus. All scorers must complete a holistic scoring training session and demonstrate a high degree of reliability before becoming eligible to score these exams. The seminars are a vital part of writing instruction at Southeast. In 1987 after the entire English Department was trained in holistic scoring, the WP002 overall failure rate decreased from approximately forty percent to sixteen percent. Workshop participants from areas other than English have observed that the scoring experience has generated an awareness of certain qualities of writing that should be encouraged in their own class assignments.

Holistic scoring guidelines are based on those used at City University of New York (CUNY). Essays are assigned scores from zero through three indicating a non-mastery level of writing and scores of four through six denoting a mastery level. A combined score of seven on both essays is required to pass the test and is considered to demonstrate minimal competency. All essays are evaluated by at least two independent scorers. More extensive information on holistic scoring is found in Ed White's model in Teaching and Assessing Writing: Recent Advances in Understanding, Evaluating, and Improving Student Performance. (Jossey-Bass 1985).

At Southeast the Writing Center staff works with writing assessment both indirectly and directly. Indirectly as we tutor students with writing problems, we are addressing the criteria of good writing required during writing assessment. Presently the Writing Associates and the graduate assistants in the Writing Center also teach composition courses each semester, so some tutors ~~instructors~~ may be teaching the Written Expression course.

Another important role of the Writing Center is as a clearinghouse for information regarding the WP002 and WP003 tests. Students who fail those tests are notified of that failure and encouraged to come to the Writing Center for immediate counseling and help in passing these exams. If students take the exam on schedule as soon as they complete 75 hours of coursework, there is ample time to seek additional help or pursue alternative options for passing the proficiency requirement.

The staff in the Writing Center is much more involved with the 75-hour writing proficiency test. This test is given five times each year, twice in the spring and fall and once during the summer, but students can only take the test once each semester. Students who fail WP003 have several options available to them. The simplest option and the one that the greatest number of students select is the option to retake the test in a later semester. While some students are able to improve their scores and pass the test without intervention, a significant number of students who merely retake the test without receiving additional help continue to fail the exam. Unfortunately, if students wait until their final semester to try other options, the time factor may limit their choices.

A better option is to sign up for regular tutoring in the Writing Center to prepare to retake the test at a later date. The student works individually with a trained tutor who can assess and work with particular writing problems. Since the tutors are familiar with the test format and holistic scoring, they can provide the student with help directly related to the test itself. The WP002 and WP003 exams are on file in the Writing Center and are available to help both the student and tutor see the nature of the student's writing problems. Students with little hope of passing the test on their own have passed the test, often on their next try, after working regularly with a tutor for several weeks.

Alternatives for students who have failed WP003 include several options which allow the student to compile a portfolio of writing to fulfill the writing requirement. The portfolio option is particularly appealing to the student who has trouble writing in a short time span. Many of our international students are in this category. Because they are thinking and writing in a second language, they may need longer for writing and revision in order to produce a polished piece of writing.

Students can build a portfolio in a number of ways. Students who take the proficiency test on schedule and fail may elect to take an intermediate composition class which builds on the writing skills taught in freshman composition classes and provides additional guidance and practice in writing. Their portfolio is compiled from the writing assignments completed in the course itself under the direction of the instructor. The student has the opportunity to revise and discuss the papers with his instructor. This option is chosen by many students who recognize that their writing skills are still below minimal competency levels. Before passing the writing proficiency test became a graduation requirement, the university usually offered one section of intermediate composition each semester. Now multiple sections are offered each semester in order to handle the increased enrollment brought about by students working to improve their writing skills in order to pass the test. This course has proven especially effective in helping international students write more clearly.

Another method of building a writing portfolio requires the student to schedule three separate three-hour writing exams. The writing done for these exams makes up the portfolio. The essay questions are prepared by the Coordinator of Writing Assessment and administered by the testing service. The three writings include a personal essay, a persuasive essay with readings, and an argumentative essay.

Still another option for building a writing portfolio is by compiling writing samples from the courses in which the student is presently enrolled. This option requires that the Writing Associates collaborate with other instructors to ensure that the writing samples are actually the student's own writing. A minimum of four kinds of writing is required. Additionally, when the portfolio is presented for grading, the student must write a one-page analysis of the types of assignments contained in the portfolio.

While these portfolios are compiled in a variety of ways, all must be graded independently to determine if the student has passed the graduation requirement. Portfolios are graded by independent scorers who are familiar with the characteristics of good writing and the scoring criteria followed in our assessment program. A paper which has been deemed adequate writing for a particular class does not automatically pass the writing standard of the portfolio scorers.

An appeal procedure also exists for students who challenge their essays' holistic scores. Part of that appeal process calls for the student to submit a written appeal outlining reasons why the student believes that his writing was misjudged. As part of his appeal he must refer to the scoring criteria in the writing proficiency test booklet.

Since the 75-hour proficiency requirement applies only to those students who began college in fall of 1985 or later, we still have not reached our peak in terms of testing all students before graduation. As more students are affected by the writing proficiency requirement, we anticipate an increased volume of traffic in the Writing Center. At the same time the emphasis on writing-across-the-curriculum should help improve writing skills in all departments and colleges. In the Writing Center at Southeast we are excited about the role that we play in helping students learn to communicate effectively in writing.

Judy Strickland

Writing assignments in all disciplines not only encourage active learning in a more thorough understanding of content, but also enable teachers to raise student expectations and reinforce writing skills as a major focus in student learning. The staff in a writing center can serve as a resource for faculty in designing, implementing, and evaluating assignments. Once assignments are made, the writing center can be a vehicle for process writing and reinforcing word processing skills.

Chair: Don Hugo, Principal, Parkway North High School

Rosemarie Stocky, Reading/English Resource, Parkway North High
Topic: Influencing writing across the curriculum: a school-wide approach

Paul Reinisch, Science Teacher, Parkway North High
Topic: Teaming to structure writing assignments for active learning in science

Tom Guelker, Social Studies Teacher, Parkway North High
Topic: Alternatives to term papers: research-based writing assignments in social studies

Stella Nutter, Spanish Teacher, Parkway North High
Topic: Publishing student writing in foreign language classes

PARKWAY NORTH HIGH SCHOOL HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN ENGLISH 1989-1991 FOR TWO PROGRAMS:

THE READING-WRITING CENTER
AND
INTEGRATING STUDY, READING, AND WRITING SKILLS
ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

RECOGNITION AS AN NCTE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN ENGLISH -- 1989-1991

THE READING-WRITING CENTER AT PARKWAY NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

The Reading-Writing Center at Parkway North High School has been developed to promote active study, reading, and writing skills for students in all subject areas and all levels of the educational process. As a support service to the entire school, the Reading-Writing Center is designed to implement reading and writing activities across the curriculum. The staff of the Reading-Writing Center, one English teacher/ reading specialist, one instructional reading aide, and one computer resource assistant, work to achieve the following objectives:

* To help students with reading and writing assignments in any content area. Students may walk-in on unassigned time, be sent by teachers on a referral basis, or come to the center before or after school. In addition to receiving help with specific reading and writing assignments, students receive help in developing study/ learning strategies for successful classroom performance. Assistance is also given to complete job, college, and scholarship applications, resumes, or other writing related applications. Students who are interested in preparing for standardized tests such as PSAT, SAT, ACT, and ASVB, may attend after school workshops or receive help on an individual basis.

* To maintain a computer lab facility available for student use for relevant reading and writing assignments in content areas. Twenty-four computers are available for whole class instruction not only in English, but also for writing in the content area. The coordinator works directly with staff from content area classes and structures writing assignmentS. The use of a simple word processing program has proven successful in motivating students who have difficulty writing, and allows them creativity without the concern of legibility.

* To provide individualized elective/ tutorial reading courses as a supplement to the schoolwide effort to maintain study, reading, and writing skills across the curriculum. These courses include Skills Tutorial for grades 9 and 10 and Academic Achievement Program for grades 11 and 12. These courses are based on current research which promotes a schoolwide effort in content area subjects for skill development, providing supplemental electives, in contrast to a pull-out program for students with individual needs.

* To provide testing, diagnosis, and evaluation for new-to-Parkway students and individual teacher and/ or parent referrals.

* To serve as a resource for faculty in designing, implementing, and evaluating reading and writing assignments in specific content areas, maintaining a professional library for faculty reference.

The staff of the Reading-Writing Center provides services to all students and faculty during regular school hours, 45 minutes prior to the beginning of school, and 45 minutes after school, Monday through Friday.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RECOGNITION AS AN NCTE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN ENGLISH -- 1989-1991

INTEGRATING STUDY, READING, AND WRITING SKILLS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Study, reading and writing skills are necessary for success in any class. Teachers at Parkway North High School have worked together to promote a climate in which everyone feels a commitment to teaching these skills in conjunction with their course content. The key to success in this program lies in staff development to establish common learning strategies and terminolgy for reinforcement in all content areas. The program is facilitated daily through an English/ reading teacher who works directly with staff in the preparation of materials and team teaching, and provides a monthly newsletter for an exchange of instructional strategies among staff in study, reading and writing skills across the curriculum.

STUDY SKILLS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

During the first two weeks of school ninth grade students are introduced to study skills which will help them become academically successful during their four years at Parkway North High School, and will educate them in what Naisbitt in Megatrends, refers to as "learning how to learn." Time management and organization skills are introduced through math classes, SQ3R and "reading with a pencil" are introduced through social studies classes, double-column notetaking and the use of flashcards is introduced through science classes, and reading flexibility and test-taking strategies are introduced through English classes. Teacher developed materials are used and presented in workbook format. Reinforcement in the use of these strategies occurs simultaneously in the opening units of content area classes. Tenth grade students, during the first two weeks of the school year, review and discuss more sophisticated forms of the study skills introduced during the previous year. Juniors and seniors are expected to continue development of the skills taught in ninth and tenth grade, and since they are "experienced," reinforcement continues to develop through content area teachers.

READING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Many of the study skills taught in the opening school units include reading skills necessary for students to succeed in their content classes. The theme of the program is "SMARTIES" -- Study Methods And Reading Techniques In Every Subject. All teachers are not teachers of reading, but rather, teachers of those skills necessary to an understanding of their particular course content. Staff development exists through team teaching and workshops, as well as communication through the monthly newsletter. Within content area classes reading strategies such as Semantic Mapping, One-Sentence Summaries, Paragraph Frames, and KWL, are incorporated for a better understanding of course content.

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Teachers in all content areas include writing assignments. Parkway North High School Writer's Guide serves as a basis for all research, as MLA in-text documentation is reviewed and practiced in all disciplines. Team teaching exists with an English teacher so that the structure of writing assignments aligns with what is taught in English, and to support content area teachers. A writing center, equipped with a classroom set of computers, is available for whole class instruction. Teachers may also send individual students or small groups on a referral basis to the writing center.

SAMPLE WRITING ASSIGNENTS

Research/ Writing Assignment: Concepts of Physical Science

WRITE A POSITION PAPER FOR OR AGAINST NUCLEAR ENERGY

Paragraph 1: Introduction
Thesis Statement -- state your opinion for or against nuclear energy and have **THREE** reasons to support your opinion.

Paragraphs 2, 3, 4 -- Each reason becomes the topic sentence of the paragraph and then an explanation of the reason supports your opinion.

Paragraph 5: Conclusion

Research Requirement: Minimum of two references documented in MLA format for the bibliography. YOU MAY NOT USE AN ENCYCLOPEDIA AS ONE OF YOUR REFERENCES. You can use books, magazines, journals, pamphlets, and newspaper articles.

Sample bibliography entries: MLA Format

BOOK --- author's name, title (underlined), city of publication, publisher, date of publication.

McConnell, Frank. Storytelling and Mythmaking: Images from Film and Literature. New York: Oxford UP, 1979.

PAMPHLET --- Treat a pamphlet as you would a book.

Kilgus, Robert. Color Scripsit Program Manual. Fort Worth: Tandy, 1981.

MAGAZINE --- author (if there is one), title of article (in quotation marks), title of magazine (underlined), date of magazine, page numbers of the article.

Motulsky, Arno G. "Impact of Genetic Manipulation on Society and Medicine." Science 14 Jan. 1983: 135-40.

anonymous article --

"Portents for Future Learning." Time 21 Sept. 1981: 65.

NEWSPAPER --- Treat a newpaper as you would a magazine.

Greenberg, Daniel S. "Ridding American Politics of Polls." Washington Post 16 Sept. 1980: A17.

Mr. Reinisch -- Physical Science

Evaluation Rubric: Position Paper on Nuclear Energy

Thesis Statement (10 points) ________

Justification - 3 reasons (30 points) ________

Thoroughness of Support (30 points) ________

Style - clarity, grammar, mechanics (15 points) ________

Bibliography (15 points) ________

Total (100 points) ________

CONCEPTS OF PHYSICS

PROJECT: PHYSICS NEWSPAPER

5 options --

1. Information/ Everyday Section
2. Current Events
3. Editorial
4. Sports News
5. Biography/ Book Reviews
6. Miscellaneous Column: "ASK ?????????"

Requirements: After you receive your assignment you will be asked to write your feature using library references. The length of your article will vary according to the topic. YOU MUST HAVE A MINIMUM OF TWO SOURCES OF INFORMATION WHICH ARE SUBMITTED IN THE MLA FORMAT (see format guidelines at the end of the handout).

All articles must be in perfect form and ready for typing by

APRIL 6th

WRITING SUGGESTIONS:

WRITING A NEWS STORY

The effective newswriter tries in every line and paragraph of his copy to present information of interest and use to his readers. He tries to tell WHAT happened, WHO did it, WHEN and WHERE it happened, and HOW it was done. In addition, the newswriter tries to explain to the reader WHY the event occurred, and what its occurrence will mean to the reader.

Work to answer as many of the who, what, when, where, why, and how (and so what) in your article.

EDITORIAL: Questions and answers based on what was read on science education. You may include interviews.

Editorials often reflect current news. News stories present the facts and let readers draw their own conclusions. EDITORIALS PRESENT OPINIONS THAT ARE BASED ON THE FACTS. There is a great difference between purpose and even the tone of an editorial.

When writing your editorial, state the facts and form your opinions based on those facts!

Motulsky, Arno G. "Impact of Genetic Manipulation on Society and Medicine." Science 4 Jan. 1983: 135-40.

anonymous article --

"Portents for Future Learning." Time 21 Sept. 1981: 65.

NEWSPAPER --- Treat a newpaper as you would a magazine.

Greenberg, Daniel S. "Ridding American Politics of Polls." Washington Post 16 Sept. 1980: A17.

INTERVIEW --- Cite the name of the interviewee, the kind of the interview, and the date. The place is optional.

Pei, I.M. Personal interview. 27 July 1983.

Poussaint, Alvin F. Telephone interview. 10 Dec. 1980.

CONCEPTS OF PHYSICS

Physics Newspaper Assignment -- Evaluation Rubric

Content of article -- developed as it relates to physics (30 points). ________

Style - clarity, grammar, mechanics (15 points) ________

Bibliography (5 points) ________

Total (50 points) ________

THE BEST OF FAMILIES -- Writing Assignment

You are a member of a staff of four newspaper writers, with an editor in charge of publishing an edition which will consist of four pages: 1) Front/News: 2) Editorial; 3) Sports: 4) Society. Your edition may cover any events within a year's span of time from 1870 - 1900. You will have a specific readership or frame of reference for your paper: rich, middle class, or poor. All papers must be typed/ word processor.

NOTE: YOU MUST INDICATE A BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THE BACK OF YOUR NEWSPAPER. IN ADDTION TO THE BEST OF FAMILIES SUPPLEMENT, YOU MUST HAVE AT LEAST TWO ADDTIONAL SOURCES.

Each edition must consist of the following:

1. FRONT PAGE --

   A. title of newspaper that really existed at that time
   B. must have an illustration
   C. news articles: at least one from each category
      1. international
      2. national
      3. local

2. EDITORIAL PAGE --

   A. editorial cartoon referring to one of the articles
   B. minimum of two editorial articles
   C. minimum of three letters to the editor

3. SPORTS PAGE --

A. hero story - your hero will depend on your frame of reference, i.e. an upper class hero would perhaps be from the yachting, polo, or tennis club, while a middle class hero would have played baseball

B. two ads of new or innovative products which would appeal to the man -- these would reflect the technology of the period

C. legitimate statistics or articles on three sports

4. SOCIETY PAGE --

A. obituary for a famous person (not simply a death notice, an obituary)

B. two ads of new or innovative products that came out at this time that would appeal to the readers

C. people in fashion or society at that time

D. depending upon your readership--meetings at church, social events, plays being performed, book reviews, etc.

THE BEST OF FAMILIES - evaluation rubric

Quality of articles based on research (40 pts.) ___________

Number/ quality of articles beyond the minimum requirments

(20 pts.) ___________

Style of writing geared to readership/ mechanics

(20 pts.) ___________

Eye Appeal (20 pts.) ___________

Bibliography Format (10 pts.) ___________

VIETNAM LETTER WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Based on your reading of "Words of Home and Horror" and your own research, you are asked to do the following:

Choose a partner with whom you will write THREE letters to and receive THREE letters from. One of you will be serving a one year tour of duty in Vietnam and the other will be answering the letters from home. Once you have chosen your partner:

1. Choose a specific year to write from 1965-1973.

2. Choose an appropriate frame of reference for each partner from the selections listed below.

3. 1st letter -- just after you arrive in Vietnam
   2nd letter -- you have been in Vietnam for six months
   3rd letter -- you are a short timer, 30 days or less left in Vietnam

4. Letters must be typed or printed on 8-1/2" x 11" paper. Write the address -- be specific on the top left hand corner of each letter:

   use rank, last name, first name
   service #, U.S., R.A. N.G. E.R. O
   unit number
   A.P.O. S.F. number, if possible

5. Research requirement: MLA format (refer to Parkway North High School's Student Writer's Guide) -- list sources on the back of your third letter. You must have ONE of the following methods of research, TWO are required for an "A" grade:

   1. interview with a Veteran
   2. book, non-fiction or historical fiction
   3. magazines or newspapers

VIETNAM FRAMES OF REFERENCE

Infantry P.F.C. Drafted
Chopper Pilot Warrant Officer
Red Cross Doughnut Dolly
Nurse: Army, Navy or Marine
Photographer: Army, Navy or Marine
Medic: Army or Marine
Company Commander, Captain in Infantry, Artillery, Combat Engineers
Infantry Squad Leader E-5, Volunteered for Vietnam
O.C.S. Trained Platoon Leader Second Lieutenant
Commander of Swift boat, Ensin in Navy

PEOPLE AT HOME: FRAME OF REFERENCE

University student at Kent State -- (brother or sister)
University student at Berkley -- (brother or sister)
University student at Washington U. -- (girlfriend)
Chicago, IL -- police officer (brother)
World War II Vet -- father or uncle
Mother -- inner-city, poor
Mother -- middle class Quaker background
Mother -- one son in Vietnam and the second one just drafted
Former high school coach or teacher
Your son -- age 12 or 13 years old
Deserter -- a former Army buddy
Wife

POSSIBLE CONTENT

From Home:
How was your trip? -- first impressions
Where are you at?
What is your job, your MOS (military occupational specialty)
What are your day-to-day duties?
What do you do with your spare time?
How's the weather?
What do you think of the natives? What do they think of you?
What is your view of the war?
What do you do for R & R?
What kind of operations have you been on?

To Home:
What are you doing in school/ work?
How are the baseball, football, etc. teams doing?
How are people in Congress, the President, local leaders, sports figures, writers, entertainers, college and high school students reacting to the war?
What are you doing for fun at home -- seen any good movies, what's the latest music out?

****

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Historical Content in Three Letters (45 pts.) ____________

Style, grammar, and spelling commensurate with the frame of reference (20 pts.) ____________

Bibliography -- MLA format (10 pts.) ____________

Total (75 points) ____________

Social Studies - juniors

WRITING AN OPINION/ POSITION PAPER

WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE: HOW MUCH FREEDOM OF SPEECH SHOULD PEOPLE HAVE?

Content: Your paper should include the following --

1. Introduction
    - A. Arouse interest
    - B. Indicate subject and suggest its importance
    - C. State thesis
2. Body paragraphs
    - A. List arguments -- one main point for each paragraph
    - B. Refute each argument -- state justification to support position
3. Conclusion
    - A. Summary
    - B. End with main idea/ thesis statement

YOUR PAPER IS TO BE BASED ON CLASS DISCUSSION, THE VIDEOTAPE ON TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY, AND THE NATIONAL FORUM BOOKLET, FREEDOM OF SPEECH: WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE.

Example of setting up support for your position --

What is the statement or opinion?	The constitutional convention was necessary.	The weakness of Articles of Confederation caused concern in new government.
What is the evidence?	The trade between the states was a problem	Annapolis convention was a failure No coordination between the cololies. They were in competition with one another.
	Lack of power over foreign trade	There wasn't any central government with power to impose tariff and American industry.
	Lack of power to enforce treaties	No executive power to write and enforce treaties. Foreign countries did not recognize the American Government.
What is my conclusion?	The Articles of Confederation had to be revised because of its weaknesses.	With a new government under a constitution, the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation could be corrected. This would include a new executive branch, a judicial branch and strong central government.

AMERICAN CIVILIZATION TO 1900

Writing Assignment: Opinion/Position Paper

Approximately 1000 words (4 typed pages, double-spaced)

Due Date --

TOPIC: WHAT SHOULD BE THE U.S. POLICY ON IMMIGRATION AS WE APPROACH THE 21ST CENTURY?

Content: Your paper should include the following --

1. Inroduction
    A. Arouse interest

    B. Indicate subject and suggest its importance

    C. State thesis

2. Body
    A. Historical perspective - one or more paragraphs regarding general background information about your thesis

    B. List general arguments--three arguments

    C. Refute each argument - state justification to support position

3. Conclusion
    A. Summary

    B. End with main idea/ thesis statement

Example: Your thesis statement indicates your position that there should be a closed door policy--restrict all future immigrants

Historical perspective

General Arguments: 1. Political } Provide justification for each
2. Social
3. Economic

Conclusion

WRITING PROCESS: USE CARDS TO ORGANIZE YOUR THOUGHTS

You will have various opportunities to put ideas and support statements on 3x5 cards. This may be done individually, or in group brainstorming sessions.

Evaluation Rubric:

Cards -- 20pts. ______________

Rough Draft -- 20pts. ______________

Final Copy -- 100pts. total

Thesis Statement -- 10pts. ______________

Justification for Arguments -- 30pts. ______________

Accuracy of Content -- 15pts. ______________

Thoroughness of Content -- 15pts. ______________

Grammar/ Mechanics -- 15pts. ______________

Style - Organization/clarity --15pts. ______________

Total ______________

Spanish IV
Unit: The Newspaper

Assignment: Writing a newspaper in Spanish
(All the instructions are given in Spanish. English is used when absolutely necessary.)

1. Get together with 2 other classmates.

2. Look through the newspaper written in English.
   a. Notice the lay-out.
   b. Notice the different sections. Are they named? What are the names?

3. Look through the newspaper written in Spanish.

   a. Is the lay-out pretty much the same as the newspaper in English?
   b. Do the sections have similar names?

      1. What are the similarities?
      2. What are the differences?
      3. Is the journalistic style similar in both newspapers?

4. Choose a newspaper section that you would like to write. Each student must write an article keeping in mind the format of he Spanish newspaper and the journalistic style used.

Example: a) Front Page: One student might write an article concerning a St. Louis news. Another student might write about the problem in Panama. A third student might write about the latest news involving President Bush.

b) Sports: Sports at Parkway North, Sports in the St. Louis area, National Sports.

c) Weather Forecasting: Be sure to express the temperature using the Centigrade scale. You may have an additional Fahrenheit column.

d) Social Page: Be sure to include announcements with or without pictures of girls celebrating their fifteenth birthdays, baptismal celebrations, obituaries (Notice the Spanish format).

e) Entertainment: Reviews of film, and/or books, recipes (use the metric system for measurements) horoscope, T.V. guide, advice column, comics page, etc.

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5. When we go to the Writing Center we will use the computer program "Newsroom". Consult your "printing commands" when you are ready to print your article.

6. After you print your article, be sure to correct it putting all accent marks, initial question marks, tildes, etc. with a black ink pen.

7. The newspaper lay-out will be done in the classroom.

8. As you know, the newspaper unit is worth 140 points with the option of earning 10 additional points for extra effort and achieving more than expected.

The following rubric will be used:

Article: (General interest of article, mechanics)	100 points
Presentation:	20 points
Vocabulary: Quiz	20 points
	140 points
Extra	10 points possible

Dialogue Journals in the Writing Center: Fostering Fluency and Rapport

Cheryl Hofstetter Towns

Much as we may enjoy the challenge of tutoring students in the writing center, we are also aware of some inherent frustrations. If the center is busy, we regret the little time we have to spend with each student, and too often, perhaps, students must spend time working in isolation at computer-assisted instruction or on worksheets. The writing they _do_ do can be flat, with no real voice--for the topic may be chosen for them or selected from a pre-determined list of options, and their audience is no doubt an artificial one: more of a judge, perhaps, than a reader. As if all that were not enough, the time spent correcting papers and/or discussing errors in conferences can itself seem fruitless--how much do students actually internalize and apply the next time they write?

No, I am not about to offer a magic formula or even a new software package for eliminating such concerns. But I am going to suggest one more strategy for the tutor to add to his or her repertoire for dealing with those concerns. My suggestion is the use of dialogue journals.

Like journals of any kind, the dialogue journal provides a chance for ungraded writing practice that can foster greater fluency or ease of writing. But _dialogue_ journals go even further. With dialogue journals, the student and tutor write back and forth to each other in a genuine dialogue, asking questions, sharing experiences, responding to each other--each truly interested in what the other has to say. Hence, students find themselves writing with a purpose about topics close to home . . . and with a real audience. The tutor becomes a partner, a co-writer, a model.

That modeling is especially valuable. If a student's entry is sparse, lacking in detail, I will make a point to fill my response with vivid detail. Or if a student misspells a word, I will not mark it, but in my response I will somehow work in that word and spell it correctly. Invariably, the student's subsequent entry in the first case will be more detailed, or in the second case, will contain the word in question spelled correctly--with no direct instruction on my part. Such inductive learning and self-correction are part of the beauty of dialogue journals.

Most valuable to me, though, is the relationship that develops between tutor and tutee. Here is time spent one-on-one without the hassles of meshing the schedules of two busy people. Students get to see beneath the "tutor" mask to the person underneath, complete with a family, frustrations, good days and bad. And tutors gain valuable insights as well. Last year, for example, through dialogue journals I learned that my dyslexic student loved "gaming" (playing strategy games on computer). That knowledge provided me with a springboard from which to discuss a future writing topic. One of my returning adult students, I learned, was back in school to escape a dead-end job he still kept in order to pay

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tuition, and he was worried about his lack of study skills. I was able to respond by writing about my husband's return to school to get out of the oil field, and I also wrote down some study strategies that eased the student's fears and gave him a way to take control of his own learning. From various "traditional" students, I learned of girlfriend/boyfriend problems (our exchange could be entitled "Cheryl's Advice to the Lovelorn"), the birth of a niece, and the struggles to juggle work and school. (When I learned Keith was cooking at a restaurant over 40 hours a week, helping his dad on the farm, and taking a full load of classes, I took my cue to conference with him about overscheduling, time management, and being assertive enough to confront his boss and his dad about reduced hours.)

All of that insight gained from the dialogue journals gave me the chance to respond individually to my students as more than students. I could respond to them as people with varying needs and perspectives. And I am convinced that such responsiveness on my part helped them relax and develop as writers.

A little bit of imagination along with a look at the literature can lead to all kinds of varied applications for dialogue journals. Instead of writing on "personal experience" topics in the writing lab, students can write about their own writing processes--how they are approaching a particular writing assignment, what's working, what's giving them a hard time (metacognition and all that business). They can exchange notebooks with tutors or with other students. They can save their entry on a computer disk and then leave it in the tutor's basket for a response, thus developing computer literacy as well. Dialogue journals can be used in the writing center to provide the real writing practice necessary to supplement worksheets or CAI work.

Additionally, dialogue journals have been used successfully with diverse student populations. I first heard about dialogue journals, in fact, at the Council for Exceptional Children Conference in Chicago, where presenters talked of the value of dialogue journals with learning disabled students, who wrote with greater fluency and developed more positive attitudes toward writing after exchanging journals with their teachers. When I exchanged writing with a dyslexic college student of mine last year, I made an unexpected discovery. Nathan's regular assignments were done on computer, and while I was pleased at his progress in terms of developing ideas, I was frankly disappointed with his spelling, given the fact that he had access to the spell-check function of the program. Each of his first two papers contained around six misspelled words per page. My disappointment turned to awe, however, when he began submitting his journal entries. I gained a new appreciation for the hard work and diligence that he must have been devoting to his graded assignments, for his "true writing" in his dialogue journal revealed to me the severity of his spelling disability. In his journal entries, he might have six misspellings (or more) per sentence. Because of my newly gained insight, I was able to compliment his final drafts, where before I may have criticized, and I was able then to take a positive approach toward helping Nathan manage his remaining misspellings: "Nathan, you've done a remarkable job of editing out most of your inevitable misspellings--good work. Now, to take care of those that remain, do you know anyone who can act as a final reader/editor after you've done your own editing on the computer but before you hand in a final draft? I want you to hand in your original version, your self-edited version, and, of course, your final version."

Additionally, dialogue journals have been used successfully with hearing impaired and mentally handicapped students. And an ERIC search under the topic "dialogue journals" turns up countless examples of ESL students benefiting from the interactive writing of dialogue journals.

Even five year olds have been studied. In England, the classroom teacher saw that her students' writing lacked voice: "It became clear that it was the children themselves that were missing. The boring sentences sounded as if they had been borrowed from basal readers. There was no hint, indeed no sign, of the individuality of the children" (Hall and Duffy 523). The teacher thus sought a way to provide a real sense of audience so that students might move beyond such "cloned" writing. Dialogue journals proved to be the answer; students subsequently developed a voice, expanded

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their vocabularies (once the spelling restriction was lifted), and "enjoyed the sense of a special 'writing' relationship with their teacher" (524, 528-9). Such benefits, I believe, would result at any age level.

Lest one believe that only struggling, emerging, or disabled writers gain from dialogue journals, consider gifted students whose writing my be artificial or stifled by an early emphasis on correctness over fluency. In one case, a gifted student exchanged writing with her father, and aside from the kinds of benefits naturally associated with dialogue journals, the father and daughter now have a unique family keepsake (Farley and Farley). Or consider the example of the teacher who had her graduate students exchange dialogue journals with her and among themselves. She writes that the dialogue journals were "a useful tool for discovering how students were responding to readings and classroom discussion and how they were making connections between theory and classroom practice." She notes further that "the journals enabled me to provide individual help when limits of class time precluded it" (Mikkelsen 744). And one of her students wrote, "This written response is keeping us focused" (745).

I used dialogue journals last fall with my Basic Writing Skills class. Although one student admitted, "Quite honestly, this feels a little strange having a teacher as a pen pal," the class turned out to be one of the best I have ever taught. (And that particular student ended up writing more in his notebook than any other student!) The class evolved into a warm, open, positive group, and I had no problems with attendance--quite remarkable for a basic writing class, in my experience. Yet the only change in my approach from previous years was the addition of dialogue journals. Granted, it may simply have been a better crop of students to begin with, but my "teacher instinct" (coupled with my equally scientific woman's intuition) leads me to attribute much of the class's success to the written interaction we shared.

So--if you are now interested in using dialogue journals, how do you manage them? How? How much? How often? With whom? As noted, students can keep their journals in notebooks or on computer disks. You can give students an initial "starter" idea ("Tell me about your first week of classes"), or you can just let them begin on their own. I required a half-page minimum entry, but there are arguments on either side of that fence, so you decide for yourself if you want any length restrictions. My class of twelve turned their notebooks in to me on Tuesdays, and I would return them with my responses on Thursdays. In the writing lab, a tutee could bring his or her notebook to one session and pick it up with the tutor's response at the next. Or if you have several students you would like to involve with dialogue journals but you don't have the time to respond to each one, try a rotating schedule with different students at different points in the semester, or have students exchange among themselves (or even between different classes), with occasional entries from tutors.

Practically speaking, it may not be possible to use dialogue journals in every class or with all your students in the writing lab. But having used dialogue journals once, I now cannot imagine a semester of teaching/tutoring without at least some such exchange, if even to a limited degree. The experience is just too rich to forgo.

Works Cited

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Beyond Tutoring: Expanding the Definition and Services of the High School Writing Center

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Burlington Community High School, Burlington, Iowa

As in most high school writing centers, our primary work has been and is working with students in the one-on-one conference, and we believe that this service alone is a most valuable function for any center. However, since its inception and throughout its development, we have been interested in making "The Write Place" a true "Communication Resource Center, and we continue to refine and expand the services we offer to both students (and their parents) and staff.

The following is a sharing of the major materials and services which we use in "The Write Place" to provide assistance to students and staff within and beyond the traditional school day. If we can provide additional information or additional ideas about any of these, please contact us.

Burlington Community High School is a four year high school of approximately 1700 students. There are currently 11 language arts instructors. "The Write Place" has been developing since 1983-1984. The center was operated with volunteers in 1984-1985, 1985-1986, and 1986-1987, was fully funded in 1987-1988, and was partially funded in 1988-1989. As a result of staff reductions in the spring of 1989, the center is no longer funded by the district, and all work is done by seven language arts instructors who volunteer to work during their planning period, before and after school, and in the activities beyond the traditional school day. The center is located on the second floor of the library and is equipped with one Apple IIc computer and reference materials.

The center has continued to develop with three major objectives: 1. to provide remediation, reinforcement, and enrichment in all aspects of writing/learning to students on a request/referral basis, 2. to provide introduction, remediation, reinforcement, and enrichment in all aspects of writing/learning in all classes in all subjects on a request basis, 3. to become the center for the exploration, development, and sharing of writing for learning activities within the high school.

In addition to work with students on a request or referral basis during the school day, those who work in "The Write Place" are available to work with students before and after school. Many of our students do not have time to visit the center during the school day, and we believe providing assistance before/after school is a most important service.

We reinforce the use of a number of writing "worksheets" by making these available and encouraging their use in the center. Copies of the "Writing Assignment Worksheet," "WALK," "Reader Evaluation Sheet," and various study skills worksheets are attached.

We also schedule mini-workshops before/after school to help students with essay exams, research processes and products, etc. "The Write Place" is also the center for all writing contests, and we also sponsor mini-workshops before/after school for students interested in entering the same writing contest and our own school sponsored "Veda Oberman Bruner Writing Contest."

We also produce a publication of student writings titled "Student Stuff." We solicit materials from all students, and we print all materials which are submitted. We believe that all students benefit from being published, and we distribute copies of "Student Stuff" to the entire school. Such a project is an effective way to encourage other students to become involved in "The Write Place." We work with our keyboarding instructors and ask the students who are enrolled in these classes to type the submissions for duplication.

Beyond these activities to aid students within the traditional school day, we offer several important evening activities for students and parents. Although students benefit most directly from these "beyond school" sessions, the public relations value generated among parents can not be overlooked.

Our largest event is our annual "Study Skills Night" which we hold in early October. We offer a series of concurrent sessions about study skills, test taking strategies, writing ideas and strategies, note taking in specific classes, etc. to all middle and high school students and sessions for parents to help them better assist their students with writing/learning at home. We have content area instructors make presentations about note-taking and test-taking in specific content areas, and in the fall of 1989, we will use elementary teachers who were involved in a local Iowa Writing Project to make presentations about reading and writing for parents of elementary students. This event usually attracts 250 - 300 participants and is our largest undertaking.

In addition to this, we also sponsor two other evening sessions for students and parents to help them with college application essays and scholarship application essays. Samples of the materials we use in these sessions are also attached. These evening events involve much time and effort, but we believe the direct and indirect benefits of these sessions are invaluable.

Beyond the services we offer directly, we believe that involving all staff in writing to learn and writing to show learning is of utmost importance in improving student writing/learning abilities, and we attempt to provide many services to staff as well as students. We sponsor informal "coffee breaks" and "open houses" to encourage all staff to visit "The Write Place" and to share ideas and information about writing and learning.

"The Write Place" instructors are also available to make presentations about writing/learning within all content classrooms and/or to work with content area instructors in developing and presenting such materials. Center personnel are also available to work with and respond to student works within all classrooms.

We have developed the "Writing As Learning Activity Worksheet" to help instructors develop writing to learn activities, and we encourage the instructors to coordinate their worksheet with the students' "Writing Assignment Worksheet."

We publish a quarterly newsletter titled "The Write Stuff" which is a staff written sharing of ideas about writing to learn, reviews of professional materials, actual materials and ideas used in classes, and staff creative writings.

We also work with staff on their own college or professional writings.

Our future plans include making "The Write Place" a bookswap center, offering introduction to word processing through the center by using the computers in the library's computer lab, and coordinating our efforts with teachers in other buildings.

Despite many obstacles, "The Write Place" has survived and has grown. We continue to offer assistance to students on a request/referral basis, but it is the expanded services which we offer to students and staff that we believe will have the most important long-term benefits. Again, if we can provide additional information about any of these ideas or materials, please contact us.